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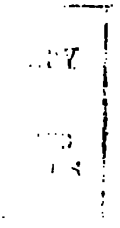
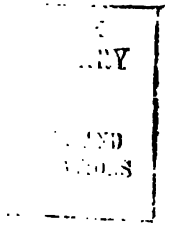
MY STRANGE LIFE





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MARY PICKFORD

My Strange Life

THE INTIMATE LIFE STORY
OF A MOVING PICTURE ACTRESS

Illustrated with Photographs of America's
Most Famous Motion Picture Actresses

New York
Edward J. Clode
Publisher

[c 1915]
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MY STRANGE LIFE

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April 18th.

My secret!

How can I tell it? How can I bear to confess it?

I have sat here—it must be hours, now—here in my dressing-room, beside the vacant studio. Long since the arc-lights ceased their sputtering, the director and actors went home. But I could not go home. I came and flung off my slippers and slipped into my Japanese kimono, the one that H—— gave me, and let down my long hair; and though lately I have loved to sit thus, and dream and play a part, to-night, it is not playing; to-night, it is torture. I cannot go until I make a beginning. If I don't start writing, I will ruin this week's work; for the past is rising upon me, and struggling with me, and breaking my heart.

But, no; I cannot tell. After all, my secret is mine.

April 25th.

That was a week ago. It is a spring night now: mist, silence, and late, so late! It was a spring night then, five years ago; but where is the girl I then was? I look in the mirror at that face, with the lines round the mouth, and the seeing eyes; I look in the mirror at the face that millions of people see every night all over the world, and I wonder: is it I?

What multiple reel picture have I played in, as dramatic, as intense, as amazing as the five years that lifted me from obscurity, from ignorant, crude girlhood, into the glare and fame of the world?

And the secret of it all? The secret that makes me feel and think and write like thirty, when I am so much younger? It is like a demon and a child in my heart; it flays me, yet I shield and nurse it. No, not yet! not yet! I cannot tell it! Perhaps when I am ten years older; when I am more "settled!" Yet if that girl goes ahead with him! I will not think of it!

April 27th.

To Annette Wilkins:

You will see from the above, what a struggle I have had to bring me to the clear thinking and decisive action of this moment. But I see the real reason now. *It was my jealousy of you.*

Does that amaze you? That I, world-famous, should be jealous of a little unknown girl who wants to act in the movies? Ah, it is not your wanting to act that makes me jealous! It is woman against woman—over a man!

But you cannot be more amazed at this than I am myself. That I should be jealous of him now, when I thought he was out of my life; when I thought he was as one dead to me; now, when this great, new happiness is dawning for me, the happiness that is being shattered by my past! How deep was his grasp upon my spirit, that now again I can think of no one else!

So, now you know. Perhaps you will proceed to tear this all up, and not read it. I beg of you to read it. I have conquered my jealousy. And why should I be jealous? I know what he is like—and you don't.

Or, perhaps, you will think it is spite; but it is not. Do you remember meeting me down in Washington, when our company went there to get the Capitol as a background? H——, the director, introduced you to me. I thought you very sweet, very young, but inordinately ambitious! I almost seemed to see myself of half a dozen years ago. Surely you are no more than sixteen.

H—— knows *him,* of course! First H—— asked me whether I did not think there was a place for you up in our studio. He said you wanted to act in the movies. Then, finally, he told me you were in love with *him,* and that *he* had promised to marry you, and make you famous—if you would work in the same studio that he does. And H—— wanted to save you from *him,* by taking you on, up here.

I couldn't work any further that day. My passion was not dead, but sleeping. It woke; *he* became alive again. And yet I felt that if I let you go ahead blindly, it would be nothing short of criminal. I tried to forget myself, and to think of you as if you were my younger sister, or my child. I tried to see myself in you. I told myself that I must warn you before you took this step. Of course, we could not take you on up here, for

that would mean his coming up to see you, and so bring him into my life again. But to let you go ahead with him, would probably mean the last of you! As it has of others!

Besides, what conception can you have of what it means to work in the movies? Of what goes on behind the beautiful, romantic screens in the theaters, of what goes into the making of a picture, of what goes into the making of a moving-picture star? Luckily, you will be away in Chicago the next few months. This gives me breathing time; this gives me time to set all down, and to determine whether you shall ever see this, or not.

I pause now for a moment to ask your forgiveness—if you should ever see this—for suddenly coming into your life, I, a stranger, with such intimate revealings. But I see now that I must try to do it. And I see now that you must be willing to face the truth. It will be hard for you.

But better to be disillusioned now than later. Better, if you persist in going ahead, to go with your eyes open!

I would have sought you out, and talked with you, and gotten to know you—but I can never speak my secret to anyone. This is

easier, to unburden my heart on paper; here, alone, at dead of night.

So, I will tell you—as much as I can.

Will you try to understand me? Will you believe my motive is pure and true? Will you trust me that I am telling the truth? I beg you, I beseech you to do so.

April 30th.

I must begin, I am afraid, by telling you of the great shock that came to me when I was about fifteen years old; for my whole future was determined by it. It made me what I am to-day, for good or evil.

You see, we lived in Pittsburgh, the city of smoke and flame. And now comes my first confession. I should like, of course, to say that I came of a wealthy, aristocratic family, and defiantly chose acting because of my overwhelming passion for it. The reverse is true. My father was a steel-worker; and all through my childhood, I lived in a dirty little mill-house, clinging to the bare hill, opposite the blast furnaces; and I was brought up in squalor and ugliness. Yet I am proud, in a way; for my father came of that wonderful Presbyterian, Scotch-Irish stock, the American pioneers that settled in Western Pennsylvania, back before the Revolution, and that made Pittsburgh what it is to-day. They, themselves, never did things half-way; they produced either millionaires or paupers.

Ancestors of mine fought in the war of '76; my father himself, a mere boy, went to

the Civil War, and was badly wounded at Gettysburg. When he came back, he found Pittsburgh a changed city. It had become an industrial center for the manufacture of iron and steel. And, as he had put the years when he should have been gaining an education into fighting and soldiering, there was nothing for him to do but to go to work in the mills. At that time, however, this was considered an excellent thing. Big money was being made, and the workers were aristocrats, well-off, strong, with happy homes and a pleasant future.

Changes came rapidly. Machinery took the place of men, and wages dropped steadily. The mill-owners began importing cheap foreign labor, until the Slavs overran the city; and so, at about the time I was born, my father was becoming a miserably poor laboring-man.

I think if he had lived he would have risen in some way, for he had just been appointed foreman in his department, and he had ambition.

He had married a French-Canadian girl. Three children were born, and all died. I was the fourth. I refused to die; as I have many times since. But, before I was born, my

father had already succumbed to an attack of pneumonia; and when I was little more than three months old, my mother followed him. My father's best friend adopted me; and I grew up in spite of everything. My earliest recollections are of playing over heaps of pig-iron, and wallowing in iron filings; and of dodging the dinky engines in the railroad yards; and of seeing at night, just before I was put to bed, the rolling flames and illuminated smoke against the sky, when the furnaces were "tapped."

In one of the great strikes I remember secretly following my foster-father, and getting into the riot, where, not understanding at all what was expected of me, I yet raged and shrieked like all the rest, until a constable snatched me up in his arms, growling, "What is the kid doing here?"

I bit and tore at him in so wild a fury that he slapped me and set me down. No wonder that later the nickname was applied to me that still sticks. Even then, I was "The Little Panther."

I had more or less of a primary education in a miserable public school; more or less, I say, because neither my parents nor the teachers could do anything with me. My

sweet, nervous, overworked foster-mother (I called her "Moms") finally stopped trying to discipline me, and rather let me rule her; for punishment made a house-breaker out of me. The real reason that they feared me, however, was because of my towering courage. I was not afraid to do anything then, nor am I now.

But I was not vicious all the time. A good part of the time I was dreaming; acting little ideals of my own; playing that I was rich and beautiful. How I longed to be beautiful! Even to-day I do not really know whether I am or not, though they all say I am.

But beautiful or not, the boys ran after me from the time I was six. Literally ran, too. Half a dozen of them would start from school on their skates, and I before them, running like the wind.

Nevertheless, although I always attracted boys and was attracted toward them, I did not have any early, serious love-affair. These episodes were really delightful, exciting games, leaving no trace behind them. Besides, "Moms" was the sort of woman who might have become a nun if she had not married. I believe now that she was morbid concerning love and marriage, and managed to

bring me up in too great an ignorance of what life meant. So at fifteen I was utterly innocent, with rainbow ideals of what men and women were.

I was in the second year of high school, and quite unhappy. I recall my foster-father at that time, as a big, powerful man, dark, with a great shock of hair, many creases in his gloomy face; mighty arms—sitting at table, perhaps in his woolen shirt all soiled from the mills, eating ham and eggs rather noisily. I respected him, and I think, really loved him. But a storm was brooding over our home. I felt it. It made me hate to be there. "Moms" seemed always busy somewhere in the shadows, flitting about, like a hurt and frightened phantom; her pale face haggard and drawn, her eyes filled with a dreadful accusation. It was bitter winter time; day by day I felt more lonely and forsaken; and now sometimes my foster-father was absent. "Moms" wept a good deal, and treated me almost as if I were not there.

May 2d.

This is the way it was. I must tell it. Twilight of a winter's day; a little hard snow falling like black granulations from the sky; our kitchen full of soft shadows, with the stove, like a little red heart, shining in it. But strange though not new, was the way, every time the mills in the distance flamed, a sort of reddish lightning went through the room. And in this lightning, I saw "Moms" on the floor, leaning against the window-sill.

I had come up the steep hill, climbing the path of wooden steps, and thinking of a boy in school. Finally, I reached the little road on which half a dozen houses stood, ours among the number. I was little prepared when, opening our kitchen door, I saw in the lurid, glancing light, "Moms" crouched on the floor against the window.

I walked over to where she was, softly.

" 'Moms'!" I said, and again, " 'Moms'!"

She turned and looked at me, her eyes like those of an animal at the point of death.

Then she held up her hands, and impulsively I seized them, and helped her to her feet. I suddenly felt older than she. She seemed, indeed, nothing but a poor child.

Then she bound me to her in her arms.

"Nella! Nella! My heart's a broken thing!"

I gave one sob, though I tried hard to swallow it.

"Oh, let me tell you—I'm so lonely, so lonely!"

"I'm here, 'Moms,'" I said.

Then she told me, in broken, fragmentary, disconnected words. She told me—and even now my heart shrinks up like a dead leaf—that her husband was unfaithful to her.

I remember slipping to her feet, and clutching at her, as if to keep from fainting.

I was fifteen. I was ignorant beyond measure. But I identified myself with her, and shared her contempt for her husband. My respect for my foster-father had been one of the foundations of my life; now this was taken from me.

Ah, dear "Moms," if you had known what you were doing to me, would you have thrown your woman's burden on a girl's shoulders? If you had known that my best faith in life was destroyed, so that I became cynical about men, and about marriage, and felt old and wise before my time, would you have made me your confidante?

I remember at last how frightened she was, lifting me in her arms and soothing me; and when I said that I would kill my foster-father, begging me to grow quiet.

When he came in for supper, there were two flitting shadows in the kitchen, not one. I never let him kiss me after that.

May 5th.

H—— sent me roses to-day. They are before me, against the mirror. Why can I not take more pleasure in them? H—— is so good, so patient! Perhaps he understands this secret struggle I am going through. For I am thinking of *him*, and of the first time I met him. I was seventeen at the time. I was in the little mill town of A——, not so far from Pittsburgh.

I had run away from home; run away three months after my foster-mother died . . . that memory I needn't revive here. For three months I lived with the man who called himself my father, trying to keep house for him. He finally told me he was going to remarry. Early the next morning, with the few dollars "Moms" had given me, and a bundle of my clothes, I left the house and took the trolley car.

I trolleyed all that day. That evening I reached A——, and found a lodging-house. The landlady was a sweet woman who thought I was a stranded actress. That gave me an idea. I changed my name on the spot to the name I still bear. And that, in turn, gave me another idea. I had so far displayed only

one talent, a trick of playing the piano by ear without the least effort. While I understood perfectly that my inability to read or play by note, and my lack of any real musical knowledge, would stand in the way of my obtaining any position as a teacher for even the most elementary pupils, I had a somewhat vague idea that I ought to be able to turn my gift to some practical account. By a happy chance, the parlor of my new home was furnished with an old-fashioned square piano of some forgotten make. It must have been an unusually good one in its day, for its tone was still sweet, if somewhat spinet-like.

The evening after my arrival, I found courage to sit down and play in the twilight after supper, taking advantage of the fact that the room was empty. I began very softly and a little timidly, playing some old-fashioned songs that, in happier days, "Moms" used to sing while at work about the house. I hardly knew the names of any of them, only recalling the words of some of the verses here and there. Somehow, their old-time rhythm seemed peculiarly adapted to the tone of the old instrument. Never had they sounded better to my own ear.

Gradually gathering courage, I branched

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MARGUERITE CLARK

out into snatches of songs from one or two popular light operas, which I had heard on hand-organs, and which some of the boys and men I knew were accustomed to whistle. Many of them were in waltz time. I had always loved waltzes more than anything else. There is something about the swing of a waltz that excites me tremendously, although I think there is no sadder music in the world!

I had played myself into a complete unconsciousness of my surroundings, when I was suddenly brought to a realization of time and place by a sudden burst of applause from the hall outside, when I had come to the end of one of my selections. With a startled cry, I sprang from my seat, and was about to run from the room, when my landlady's niece, a handsome young girl, who could not have been much younger than I, appeared in the doorway, blocking my retreat.

"Oh, Miss Moreland, please don't stop!—that is, of course, unless you're tired. You don't know how we're enjoying it! Haven't you heard us dancing in the hall?"

As if to confirm her statement, the laughing faces of one or two other young girls and several young men suddenly appeared behind her. I was both pleased and flattered

know, is most enthusiastic about your talent. And I should not be at all surprised if it would lead to much better things. I have a friend who can probably offer you something much better later on. But I will not say any more about that at present, for fear we should be disappointed. Just now, he is away for a week or more, but we shall see what we shall see, upon his return."

With these kind words of encouragement, I was, as may readily be supposed, more than content; although I speculated in private as to whom her mysterious friend, who had it in his power to offer me something better than playing for young people's parties, might be. Around this unknown, I built many castles in the air, none of them more wildly improbable than the reality turned out to be.

In the meantime, I was lucky enough to be engaged to play for several dancing parties, and was fortunate enough at all of them to give satisfaction. With each experience I gained in assurance, and at the end of a week was conscious that I had improved very much in my playing.

It was a new experience, too, for me to watch these young people, all approximately of my own age. It must be remembered that

I knew absolutely nothing of society. And although this society must have seemed very simple and provincial to anyone with any worldly experience whatever, to such a barbarian as I, it afforded a much needed opportunity to study the manners and customs of a world to which I was entirely unaccustomed. For even if these boys and girls were somewhat countrified, with few exceptions they belonged to families of gentlefolk. There was much which they could teach me and which I was glad to learn. I have always been an apt pupil. I suppose it is the same gift of mimicry that has made me a successful actress, which has enabled me to cover up the defects in my early education by imitating the manners of people whose early opportunities were better than my own.

But to return to my story. It was a little over two weeks after I had embarked on my new labors that I was playing at one of the largest parties of the season. Toward the middle of the evening I noticed the mother of the young hostess in earnest conversation with a man of middle age who had apparently only just arrived.

He seemed to be known to most of the young people present, all of whom seemed

glad to see him; but it was apparent that he had come with some other purpose than that of joining in the evening's amusement. I had only time to note that he was dark and stout, and that several times during his conversation he found time to glance inquiringly in my direction. He seemed, too, to be paying particular attention to the music. I was not embarrassed with this knowledge. For some reason or other, I was fully conscious that I had never played with more fire and spirit.

But it was not until refreshments were being passed around that he came and spoke to me. He came over to where I was sitting behind the piano, a plate of ice-cream and cake in one hand, and a glass of lemonade in the other. I noticed with amusement that his face was puckered with anxiety as if he were in fear of making a misstep and dropping his burden. Looking up suddenly, he met my amused glance.

"You shouldn't laugh at me," he said, with mock-seriousness. "I'm afraid I would never be able to hold a job as a waiter. But our hostess asked me to come to your relief, and I'm doing the best I know how."

I rose from my seat and held out my hands

for the dainties, expressing my thanks at the same time. He stood for some time in silence watching me as I greedily consumed my ice.

"Do you know you play remarkably well?" he asked at length.

"I ought to," I answered pertly. "I've been told so, often enough lately." But I hastened to add that everyone had been more than kind about my small accomplishment.

"Have you ever thought of doing anything with it?" he asked.

"I've thought of little else," I replied seriously. "You see I have to earn my living, and it's the only thing I can do at all well."

"I see," he said, nodding his head. I do not know whether he intended pursuing the subject, but at that moment the grandfather's clock in the hall struck the hour. With a hasty glance at his watch and a hurried "good-night," he left me to say a few words to his hostess. A moment later I saw him going through the hall to the front door.

I had no opportunity to ask anyone who he was. After I got to bed that night, I wondered if by chance he and Mrs. Merker's friend could be one and the same, but I was too sleepy to give the matter much thought.

The next morning I was busy with some work up in my room, when Alice came running in to say that her aunt wanted to see me in the parlor downstairs. Stopping only long enough to look in the glass to see if my hair was smooth, I ran down.

Sitting there, talking familiarly with Mrs. Merker, was my acquaintance of the night before; the gentleman who had brought me my ice-cream and complimented me on my playing. In another moment I found myself being presented to him formally.

He was, it appeared, Mr. Edward Van Enden, the owner of the largest moving-picture theater in A——. In a thorough business-like manner, he explained his errand. He wanted a pianist for his place. The young man who had been with him ever since it opened, while perfectly satisfactory professionally, could not be relied upon, owing to a tendency to go on occasional sprees lasting from two to three days. He had been warned several times, but had apparently not taken the warning to heart.

Doubtless the knowledge that there was no one in the town who could begin to play as well as he could, coupled with the fact that he knew that his employer preferred to

engage local talent rather than import someone from any of the larger cities, gave him a false feeling of security. But he had transgressed once too often.

The position was open to me, if I cared to try it. At the end of two weeks, if Mr. Van Enden and I were not mutually satisfied with each other, I would be free to resume my present irregular occupation. If I cared to try it! I did not hesitate a moment. In addition to the fact that this meant regular employment at a regular salary, playing for the "movies" in itself appealed to me tremendously. There would be a fresh interest and excitement about it. I confess that playing for other people to dance—and always the same people, practically—was beginning to pall upon me, ungrateful as it seemed. I was to begin my new work at once.

Two weeks later I had the job. I was the official pianist at the Imperial Motion Picture Theater in the town of A——.

I wonder if I can recall that girl of seventeen! I always had an original way of dressing; a sort of sharp way, with dashes of color in it. I wore my heavy hair down my back, sometimes with a ribbon round the top of my head and tied in a little bow. Already I had

the panther tread in walking, the half-sliding, half-sinuous movement, which is now so fashionable. It was quite natural to me, with my strong, shapely body.

I lived in that little town of A—— very quietly, sleeping late, arriving at the theater at one o'clock, and with an hour off for supper, staying until half-past ten or eleven o'clock at night. The proprietor, Van Enden, being, as I have said, a friend of my good landlady, was always polite and good to me. Otherwise I should not have stayed there, at eight dollars a week.

I was very happy at the Imperial. It was a small theater, seating only three hundred people; but it did an excellent business, especially at night, when a great crowd always waited in the back for the seats to be emptied. It was very dark and poorly ventilated, but I grew to love the impenetrable gloom; I, a dark spot under the white screen, and that living mass of breathing humanity behind me. I think I had something to do with the good business, for I was, in a way, a good actress, even then. I threw myself into each film that came along, and, not being able to express the story in acting, I expressed it in music, showing every change in emotion and

action on the piano-keys under my fingers. It was arduous, wearing work. I went home at night, spent. But I loved it. Perhaps I made the films more alive to the audience, even if they didn't realize it!

Of course I fell in love. That was inevitable. A girl of my nature has always to love someone. And so my infatuation began. Yes, of course, that is all it is! Or, that is all it must be; I will not permit it to be anything else! I am afraid that the characters in the films were too real to me. You see, I was communing with them all day; and, you might say, trying to get them to act better, helping them out with my playing. Besides, I was not meeting any people to speak of. And then my cynical attitude toward men! The strong sex seemed quite corrupt to me! Imagine, then, how I felt when I began to watch *him*—I must say his name sooner or later—imagine how I felt when I began to watch Roland Welles, week after week, upon the screen!

Roland Welles! The name itself cast a spell upon me! And the beauty of the man—the athletic build, the great square shoulders, the rolling mane of hair above that smooth, handsome face; that face with its large

liquid eyes, fine nose, and sweet, strong lips. Dark and handsome, heavenly—to a girl of seventeen! I do not blame you, Annette Wilkins, for falling in love with him! But it was not his beauty after all. No; it was the fact that he was my ideal of a man. He had none of the taint that I attached to other men. He was the "Galahad of the Movies," pure, chivalric, noble. Week after week, whether he was playing in a dress suit or a cowboy costume, he was the same. He was the perfect lover; he was the high-minded man who saved girls from dishonorable men; he was the hero, tender, brave, dominating, gentle.

Of course, what I had found was the opposite of my foster-father. Here was he who was the other extreme; the well-bred manner, the aristocratic bearing, the chaste heart. I had found what I was seeking. I was madly in love with him.

I lived now only when he appeared; in between, I was merely dreaming. But when at last his turn came, the dark and lost pianist beneath him became an invisible flame.

In my usual way, I made up my mind to meet him; and whenever I make up my mind, the thing happens. Why this is so, I don't

know. But perhaps it is this element in my life which makes me feel that no photo-play I have ever acted in is more strange and unaccountable than my own career.

You see, many of the movie stars make a habit, at intervals, of going around the country and lecturing in the theaters. This is a good advertising scheme; good for the theaters, good for the stars. It gives people a new interest in their favorites. So, in the course of time, Roland Welles appeared in the Imperial Theater, bringing a record crowd to the doors.

I knew of it several days in advance, and lived in a fever. I hardly ate or slept. It was a Wednesday when he came, and he was not to appear until half-past nine, in order to keep the crowd all evening. At half-past six I went out to supper in the little place along the glaring street, with the crowds passing up and down in the brilliant, yet misty air.

Coming out of the restaurant, I stopped and bought a bunch of fresh lilacs. These I placed in a glass on top of the piano. Their scent is with me still, bringing the spring, the night, the dark theater, my first love!

It was a little after nine-thirty. The little side-door opened, under the red exit bulb,

and Van Enden appeared, a dark large shape following him. I stopped playing; the house grew deadly still; the operator left the theater in semi-darkness. Van Enden said a few words of introduction, the audience applauded wildly, and then Van Enden withdrew. Suddenly, Roland Welles was standing beside the piano, his arm on the top of it. At the same moment, the operator threw the spot-light on him. I hardly knew it, but I, myself, was caught, or at least my head, in that circle of light that splashed part of the piano and part of the screen behind it.

He was so close to me, so real; and I was not disillusioned. It was exactly as if he had stepped out of the films and had found flesh and a voice! I did not hear what he was saying; there was no need of that. It was doubtless, anyway, some stock speech about "How Pictures are Made."

I leaned forward, and the pull of my whole soul must have drawn him, for, in a few moments, he turned his head slightly, looked down a little, and met my eyes. Then, he looked away. But, ever and again, through that magic hour, he kept coming back to me, as if, subconsciously, he found his real audience in me.

Yes, I was a silly girl. But, then, infatuated girls are silly. It seemed to me that only he and I were there, even as in a scene in one of his plays. I was even shocked when the applause broke out at the end, when I saw the " Good Night " on the screen, and found myself playing the exit march, and that Roland Welles had disappeared.

When the theater was empty, I rose, leaned forward, and drew the lilacs down to my face.

And then he was standing beside me.

"Pardon me," he said, "I forgot my gloves."

And I had not seen them—right beside the lilacs. At the same time, I had a queer intuition that he had not forgotten them at all, but had left them there on purpose.

I gave them to him, my hand trembling.

"Dark little place, this!" he said.

I found my voice.

"Yes," I murmured.

"Strange," he said in an off-hand way, "a girl like you holding a job like this!"

A flash of inspiration came to me.

"It's not what I want, of course."

"What *do* you want?"

"I want to act—in the movies!"

He smiled sweetly, and looked down at me in his noble, chivalric way.

"All girls do."

"But I shall!"

My courage was rising.

He mused a moment.

"There *is* something about you! I can't say just what. Perhaps you will."

Praise from the great man! I thought I should explode with pride!

How much further he would then have gone, I don't know. But just at that moment, Van Enden came down the aisle, calling his name.

Roland Welles seized my hand, setting me trembling with his touch.

"Listen," he said hastily. "I did my best to-night on account of you—the way you look, you know. Now, if you mean it, about this acting business, look me up when you come to New York. Come to the Studio. Perhaps I'll try you out. Good-by!"

Van Enden led him off.

I have sometimes asked myself if he could have realized what his words—and his manner, more than his words—meant to me. But I know now that he did. He must have. He was too experienced, he had played with too many

women not to know. And you must remember that I was little more than a child. And I had never even fancied that I was in love before. I need not tell you, Annette, how that tender, protecting manner which you, too, must know so well, charmed and captivated me.

All the rest of that summer, I was under the spell of his voice, his look, his smile! Why do I say "all the rest of that summer," when the spell is on me still?

I went about like one in a dream. I look back, now, and wonder how it was that I held my job. Certainly I was never more than half conscious of what I was doing. I just used to sit and play mechanically. I hardly saw the pictures before me—unless, of course, *he* was in them. Then I played only for him. As if he could hear me! I suppose it was because for the first time in my life I was actually putting myself into my playing, that I was able to play as I had never done before. My playing actually began to be a feature of the performance.

I only lived during the time I was at the theater. For was it not *there* that I had seen him? I began going earlier and earlier—sometimes a good half hour before the per-

formance was to begin. Then I could sit there in the darkness and play the whole story of my love, my longing to see him again! That short half hour was mine. I could sit there with my eyes half closed and play to him, standing there at the piano as he had stood on that never-to-be-forgotten night. How silly it sounds, doesn't it? But you will understand.

I don't know how it got about that I had begun to go so early. But gradually the people began to come early, too. At first just one or two people who apparently enjoyed sitting in the dim little theater and listening to my music.

This had been going on for several days when Van Enden, who was a shrewd business man, saw that he could turn my new departure to account. Having sounded me on the subject, and found that I made no objection, he began to advertise that a short concert would take place each evening before the regular performance began. For this there would, of course, be no extra charge. But he knew that the people once there, they would be unlikely to go without staying for the rest of the performance. How much this device put into his pocket I cannot say. But it is

certain that, during the rest of the time I was in A—— we did a bigger business than ever before in the history of the theater. And it was all owing to me.

A few months before, I would have been half drunk with pride at the thought that it was I who was such an attraction. But now, the only thing it meant to me was, that I would be able to ask for more money. Does this sound fearfully sordid? Remember that the more money I was able to put by, the sooner I would be able to go to New York and to *him*. Money itself did not mean much to me. It never has.

It is not too much to say that Roland Welles during that whole summer dominated all my waking thoughts and many of my sleeping ones. While I was at the theater I was continually in a waking dream in which he was always beside me. I could close my eyes and see him standing there before me, as plainly as I had seen him that memorable night in the flesh.

When I was back in my little room, my dreams took another turn. I was always rehearsing our coming meeting in the autumn. I warmed myself in his welcoming smile. He would not be surprised to see me. He must

have read in my face that I would surely come.

And, then, what glorious visions I had of the success and wealth that awaited me. He had as much as promised to give me a "try out." The idea that I might fail never occurred to me. Fail with him for a teacher! And how I would repay him! All that success meant to me was that it would enable me to pour its rewards at his feet. And there would be the gift of my love beside. How foolish and innocent I was!

May 10th.

The following autumn, on a particularly bright morning, a rather travel-stained and perhaps provincial-looking girl appeared at the entrance of the X—— Studio in New York. I can hardly think of her as being myself. It took real courage, I believe, to do what I did. I had burned all my bridges in saying good-by to A—— and all my kind friends there. I had also made Van Enden raise my salary a little, and had saved penuriously. All through the summer months, I lived in two dreams—the dream of acting, and the dream of meeting my hero again. I knew I was only one girl among many whom he met. But I would show him that I was not like the rest.

So, taking my courage in my hands, I came and passed through the staggering bigness and noise of a great city. I admit that when I found the Studio at last, and entered the white entrance, full of bustle and confusion, where the telephone girl sat at the switchboard behind the railing, I lost my nerve. I was just one among millions; unknown, crude, inexperienced, a stranger among strangers.

I set down my satchel on the floor, for my hand was trembling.

"I'd like to see Mr. Welles," I said to the telephone girl.

She looked at me strangely, I thought.

"Mr. Welles!" she echoed. "What name shall I say?"

"Miss Moreland."

She began to operate the switchboard, making inquiries about the place. She located him at last on the "floor."

"Yes," I heard her say, "she wants to see you. Shall I send here in?"

I was dying to go in, to see the magic and secret chamber where those wonders were made, but the girl turned to me:

"He says to wait a minute; he'll be out."

To meet him here before these others! I had not expected that! My heart sank. I stood, anxious, almost wishing that I had not come; but also desperate, because I had burned my bridges behind me. It was Welles, or nothing.

Suddenly the stage door opened, and my amazement stunned me. A mighty Arabian appeared before me, a splendid apparition in a hooded burnoose, a fez on his head, and his feet bare.

I was thrown into such confusion that I lost my tongue. He appeared to be anxious, in a hurry. He looked round as if he feared something. I did not understand this, then.

He came up to the railing and looked at me.

"Yes?" he asked, a little unpleasantly.

"You said I should come," I whispered.

"Said you should come! When?"

"When you were in A——, last spring, the night you made the speech."

My heart was breaking within me. This was too terrible. He did not even recall me!

"A——? Last spring? Let me see."

"The pianist—you remember—I said I wanted to go in the movies."

Suddenly my heart began to sing again, for he leaned forward and looked at me with genuine interest.

"Oh, yes. Yes, I remember! And you've come! Well, I'm blest!"

I smiled.

"You said you might try me out."

His face clouded immediately.

"It's impossible. We're full up. And so many applicants."

"But," I said, my eyes filling, "I came all the way because you said——"

His look now was absorbing, as if he were trying to figure out something.

"By George!" he said; "I think you'll make a go of it—if only I could! But does it have to be movies? You know it's better to start on the stage."

"On the stage?"

"Yes. See here! I want to be your friend. Now, I know a fellow over in (he mentioned a little town across the North River) Stock Company, you know; just the place to start. Suppose I give you a note to him? Eh?"

This was far from what I had expected. I had a faint sense of disillusionment. But I murmured:

"That would be good of you."

He excused himself and went back into the Studio. A few minutes later, he came out with the note.

Then he took my hand and held it.

"I want to get to know you," he said. "You are quite different. Go get the job and I'll keep in touch with you."

With a smile, he was gone. I turned blindly, and soon was out again in the confused and dirty street.

But my love was real. I forgave Roland Welles at once for not being all that I had

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MARY FULLER

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thought he was. He was, after all, superb. And was it not sweet of him to help me? But where was I bound? What strange, new life was opening for me? Would I succeed as an actress on the stage? I, who had never spoken a line in public?

Nevertheless, I set out for the ferry.

And now I come to a phase of my life most difficult to write about! I cannot go on to-night; this warm stirring night, full of voices! H—— said to me to-day: "Nella, you ought to get away. You are killing yourself by inches!"

Ah, if he knew! Dear H——! Why can't I love you, as you love me? Why is *he* present in my heart; *he*, and the sweet, fresh scent of lilacs, drowning my soul?

May 12th.

Two bells! H—— is directing a scene in the Studio, though it is nearly midnight. Despite the rain rattling on the glass roof, I can hear the snap and sizzle of the arc-lights. I will write here until H—— is finished; then let him take me home.

By the time I reached ——, over the North River from New York, Roland Welles' note (sealed) in my hand, the afternoon had gone gray and dark. Had not a great fire burned in my heart, a great subdued force, a determination, undaunted and unquenchable, to be an actress, and make myself worthy in the eyes of my beloved, I could not have had the courage to enter the Henry Irving Theater! It was a queer, cheap, faded, draughty little theater, and a queer, faded, draughty career seemed to lie ahead of me! I swallowed hard.

A matinée was in progress.

The box-office man, when I asked for the business manager, Mr. Snyder, directed me upstairs. I climbed up into dusty twilight, and knocked on a door.

"Come!" said a big, gruff voice.

I went in, my heart thumping.

But the moment I set eyes upon him I

called him "Beaver-Face," my fear left me. I had a desire to laugh. He sat in dingy chaos, near a dirty window. A long table stood in the center of the room, littered with papers and theatrical periodicals.

Well, even now, I pucker up my nose when I think of him!

His hat was on the back of his head, and he had a little cigar-butt in his mouth. He was oldish, and keen with a sort of sickly intellectuality. But he was mainly a Beaver; eyes strange with much love-sickness, cold and gray. And then he had flat, broad teeth. And, besides, he was little and slightly lumpy. He wheeled in his chair.

"What do you want?" he grunted.

I handed him the letter, and sat down. He looked at me sharply. Then he grunted again, tore open the envelope, pulled out the sheet, and read. He looked up again with interest, and leaned toward me.

"You've had no experience?"

"No."

"How do you know you can act?"

"If you'll try me, you'll see!"

"Hm! Well, Mr. Welles ought to know! You look pretty good to me. But you'll have to start by doing everything!"

"I'll do anything!"

"General business woman, you know. Carry a jug of water one night; do 'My Lord, the carriage waits!' the next; or, maybe, half a dozen parts in one evening. Fifteen a week, and find your clothes!"

"Find them!" I echoed.

He laughed. "Green as that, eh? Find—get! Pay for them yourself! But fifteen is a good start!"

He wheeled to his desk and wrote out a slip of paper.

"Just go down to the stage and hand this to Fenny, stage manager. He'll start you in!"

I rose, thanking him. He rose also, and took me by the arm. Quick as a flash, the thought came: "We'll stop this right here, before we start," and I gave him a sharp look.

He dropped my arm as if it were red-hot.

"Well," he laughed queerly, "you're a strange one! But we'll see, we'll see what you can do!"

So I went to the stage door at the side, and the doorman, seeing the slip, let me through. Immediately, I was among the drops, the flat high-held scenery, a blaze of light on the

stage before me, and the actors at work. Behind one of the wings, a very important little man, coatless and sleeves rolled up, hat on the back of *his* head, cigar-butt in *his* mouth, stood looking about busily. I went to him.

He eyed me from head to foot.

"And what do *you* want?" he said insolently.

I gave him the slip of paper.

"General business. Experienced?"

"No."

"Well, what in blazes! Is this a kindergarten? Here, let me see!"

He went over to a little table in back of the stage, and picked up his script and looked through it.

"No part for next week. Let's see!"

He studied me again.

"Well, you'll have to go on in the intermission, and entertain."

He might as well have told me that I would have to read Sanscrit. I smiled bravely, taking the blow like a soldier; but my heart dropped out of me. A dear little girl came off the stage at that moment.

"Kitty!" he said; "come here! Kitty, this is Miss Nella Moreland! Want you two to sing a song next week, in the intermission.

You know; you in ballet, this one in boy's clothes. Just fix it up yourselves."

A wave of applause came from the front, and he was off. Kitty, who stood a pathetic creature in rags, her hair down her back, her feet bare, came to me in all sweetness. Dear little Kitty! She had the face of a child, with large blue eyes and tremulous lips. Her voice, too, was the voice of a child.

"Better come in the dressing-room. I have to change."

I followed her, again divided between laughter and tears. This was desperate. I had not looked forward to doing vaudeville work, to being practically alone before a curtain, confronting an audience. And sing? I sing? I entertain? And wear boy's clothes?

I sat down in the dressing-room, while Kitty swiftly disrobed herself.

"Oh, I'm so tired!" she said. "Rehearsed all morning! Played all afternoon! And another show to-night! Have you been at it long?"

My voice broke, my eyes filled.

"Goodness!" I began. "Goodness! Kitty, Kitty, I've never acted in my life! I've never appeared before an audience! I can't do this

to save my life! I'm going away, far away, and give it up!"

She turned, her eyes large, her lips trembling.

"Oh, you poor dear!" she cried, and flung her arms around my neck. Then she kissed me.

"Is your name really Nella? It's a pretty name. Now, never you mind, Nella. You stick to me. I'll carry you through. It's nothing at all. You let me do the singing. Just you go on and smile!"

I kissed her warmly in return, and tried to thank her, but she insisted that it was nothing at all. Any girl would do as much for another, she assured me. I wonder, now, if she believed what she was saying. If she did, her experience must have been far different from what mine has been! I thought then, as I think now, that she was the most generous soul alive!

We only had time for a few words, as the "call" for Kitty came a few minutes later. But she had managed, in the midst of her hurried dressing to give me a pointer as to where to look for a room. Unfortunately the house in which she, herself, was living was filled. But she had a list of addresses which she had

been told were good. More important still, from my point of view, the prices were reasonable.

I left her to go on and, making my way out of the theater, started to look for the place which was to be my home at least as long as I should be connected with the Henry Irving Theater. In my own heart, I doubted if that connection would be prolonged beyond the coming Monday night! But in the interval I had to find shelter somewhere.

My experience in looking for rooms was limited to my one venture when I arrived at A——. And that had been a perfectly simple matter. A kind-hearted woman who had ridden all the way from Pittsburgh on the trolley with me had recommended Mrs. Merker's, and I had only to ask my way to her house. I appreciated, now, how lucky I had been on that occasion.

As I approached the first house on my list, I saw that the "stoop" was crowded with young men who seemed to be amusing themselves with making remarks about passers-by, particularly the women. As I came nearer, a dreadful silence fell upon the unmannerly group. With one accord, they faced about and honored me with a prolonged stare.

Nothing would have induced me to apply for lodging in that establishment, particularly if these were fair specimens of what my fellow-lodgers might be.

As I went along with my head high in the air, I could hear their coarse remarks on my appearance. Some of them even whistled to attract my attention. I wondered if all the addresses Kitty had given me would prove to be of such a character.

My second venture was equally barren of result. For the landlady, a hard-faced, harsh-voiced woman, who opened the door herself, hearing that I was connected with the theater, refused to let me have a room unless I guaranteed to take it for at least a month. As a guarantee in her eyes consisted in the payment of a deposit much larger than I could possibly afford to risk in view of the doubtful length of my engagement—I had been distinctly given to understand that my getting a contract would depend entirely on whether I "made good" or not at my début—I dared not risk promising to take a room for any length of time, my own confidence in the result of the coming fateful Monday being, as I have already intimated, far from great.

The town being strange to me, and my

sense of location being of the poorest, I found the distances between the various addresses on my list much greater than I had supposed. This, doubtless, was largely due to the fact that I must have misunderstood some of the directions given me. Of course I had to inquire my way at every turn.

Darkness found me still without a lodging. I had about decided to throw myself again on Kitty's kindness, and beg permission to pass the night if necessary on the floor of her room, when I remembered that I didn't even know where she lived. I would have to wait until she was back at the theater. Even then, there was no telling how long I might have to wait before she could see me. I was tired and desperately hungry. I would ask the first person I met to direct me to some restaurant or hotel where I could get some supper.

But, on turning a corner, I found myself on what seemed to be the principal business street of the town. Staring me in the face was a dilapidated electric sign with a good half of its bulbs either broken or gone. From the ones that still were in a condition to perform the office for which they had been intended, I managed to spell out that my tired

feet had led me to the "Palace Hotel." Anything less like one's preconceived idea of a palace could hardly be imagined. However, a glance through the window of the dining-room showed me a small number of respectable-looking people gloomily occupied in the consumption of their evening meal. Anything looked good to me in my exhausted state. I went in by the ladies' entrance, wondering, as I did so, if the dilapidated sign which hung immediately over the entrance could be persuaded to stay in its place until I was safely past the dingy portal.

The dinner was better than I had hoped. Feeling utterly incapable of further exertion after I had satisfied the pangs of my hunger, I decided to remain at the "Palace" for the night, and pursue my search for a room the first thing in the morning.

Having been shown to a huge barn-like room which contained nothing but the most necessary furniture, but which, like the dinner, furnished an agreeable disappointment in that it seemed fairly clean, I lost no time in tumbling into bed. I was too tired even to dream. I awoke the next morning to find the sun streaming in through the torn and faded window-blind. I accepted it as a good

omen, and after breakfast started out again, refreshed both in mind and body. This time, luck was with me. The first place I called, I found a small room which had the merits of being both clean and neat and for a price within my modest means. I took it for a week, paying half of the rent down in advance.

Recalling what Kitty had said about morning rehearsals, I went over to the theater in the hope of seeing her and perhaps finding her free for a moment. In the latter hope I was disappointed. She seemed to be on the stage every minute of the time. But she nodded and smiled gayly on seeing me, and told me in pantomime that I was not to have any fears for Monday night.

I had feared that I might not be permitted to witness a rehearsal, being still an outsider. But no one paid any attention to me. I think for the first time I realized what unremitting drudgery falls to the lot of the stock actor. I no longer wondered that Kitty complained of being exhausted before the matinée was over. The way they went over and over scene after scene was fatiguing even to a spectator. Still, I found it all very interesting and novel. Toward the close of the rehearsal, Kitty

found time to thrust a copy of the song we were to sing together into my hand. The words and music were on separate sheets, hastily and carelessly copied from the original. My heart sank as I puzzled over them.

I spent the afternoon in my room memorizing the words. As I have said before, I could scarcely read music, all my playing being done by ear. Still, I felt that if I had only had a piano, I might have picked out the air after a fashion. But to read it absolutely by note, without any instrument to help me, was entirely beyond me. I felt, if possible, more discouraged than ever.

The evening found me again at the theater; partly because it was already a habit with me, and partly because I felt the necessity of having a conference with Kitty over the song. To my surprise, in view of the long rehearsal in which she had scarcely left the stage—I was too green to realize that I had been witnessing the rehearsal for the piece for the coming week—I found that she was not "on" at all in the third act. We had ample time, therefore, to talk things over. In her shrill voice, which was yet somehow very sweet, she sang over the air of our duet several times, quite sufficient for a person with my

quick ear to catch it. I felt more encouraged than I had at any time since the whole wretched idea was first broken to me.

Another vexed question Kitty was able to settle with ready promptness—the question of my boy's costume. Her only regret was that nothing of hers would be available on account of the marked difference in our height and figures. But she knew of a second-hand shop where I would be sure to get something that would answer perfectly, and at an absurdly low figure. She, herself, had dealt there ever since she had first been connected with the Henry Irving. She would go with me to the shop the next day between rehearsal and the matinée. Thus, owing entirely to Kitty's kindness, I was able to go to bed that night in my new room with a lighter heart than I would have dreamed possible earlier in the day.

This was by no means all I owed to Kitty before the eventful night arrived. Up to the very moment when with a sinking heart I went on for our turn, it was she who kept me from giving up in despair. She stuck firmly to her original instructions: I was not to worry, to leave everything to her, and just go on and smile.

My first public appearance, accordingly, took place the following Monday night; and there was over an hour to wait for that ominous intermission. Kitty tried to keep me cheered up, and in the ballet costume, with straps over her sloping shoulders, she looked so adorable that I had to forget now and then. But when I glanced in the mirror and saw myself, with all my heavy hair hidden under a slouch hat, and my legs in large trousers, and my hands in my jacket pockets, panic would seize me again. I wanted to run a mile; run like mad, and never stop.

The moments dragged. Between acts, girls came tearing into the room, and in a brilliant buzz, disrobed and redressed. Then they were gone again. Time hung upon us. Finally, the far echoes of applause, the hum of voices in the hall; and "props," the man of all work, knocking at the door.

"Ready," he called.

So much hung upon this trial.

"If I don't succeed," I told myself, "Roland will never have anything more to do with me!"

Months of saving, months of dreaming were now to be put to the test. And here I

was, unable to drag my feet along. The song was forgotten. My mind was a blank.

I felt myself moving in a dream. The last boundaries of safety were left, and there we were in the center of the stage, before the curtain, in the blinding blur of the footlights.

A voice rose between my lips. Was it mine? I tilted my cane; my legs swayed; I caught Kitty's laughing eyes and her sweet smile, and suddenly wagged my head jauntily and grinned at her. We had come to the end of the first stanza. To my amazement, a whirlwind of applause arose out of the blackness and rushed over us, with a thumping of feet and whistling from the gallery.

What did it mean? Suddenly, I found myself. All my old towering courage came back to me. I looked out boldly. I turned and seized Kitty and kissed her. She made believe that she was angry with me, and turned away. I wheeled her round, and whispered to her and cajoled her. Then we burst out laughing, and embraced and began to dance and sing the remaining stanza.

The house went wild. It was unbelievable. And I? I was like a fish that had been on land just up to the point of dying, and now

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GRACE CUNARD

was flung back into the water again! A born actress!

When it was over, and we had been recalled half a dozen times, I turned to go off finally, as the lights were quenched, and there in the wings I saw Beaver-Face, eying me with that lovesick look!

I went home to my little room. The building had been an apartment house, but the apartments were divided into separate rooms. Mine was a little one on the first floor, with a window looking into the back yards.

All that night, my mind went over and over again the scene of the evening. I hardly slept. In the morning, I wrote Roland Welles the news.

May 15th.

Not then as now, for now it is torture. But then, my love was like a deep undercurrent flowing through the days, sweetening and saddening my life.

Roland had replied to my letter. He congratulated me. He said he had expected it of me. Beaver-Face, himself, had sent him the news. He added: "I must see you as soon as you have time." He signed himself: "Your true friend, Roland Welles."

A great joy suffused me. I felt transfigured and ennobled. I kissed his name. I murmured devoutly: "My true friend! My true friend!"

He wanted to see me, so I went to him. I chose a morning when I was not needed at rehearsal. I tried to look my best and freshest, when I took that long trip to his studio. It was a blue and blowing day of autumn, shining and lusty. I felt very happy.

When I entered, the telephone girl recognized me.

"Mr. Welles?" she said.

I nodded, laughing softly.

"Oh, I guess," she said lazily, "you can go right in. He's on the floor.

So I opened the Studio door, went down the hall, climbed a flight of stairs into the heart of the mystery, and came out on "the floor."

I felt my spirits dashed a little. It was quite unlike what I had pictured. For the X—— Studio is one of the small ones, far different from the one I am now working in. It was really a factory building, and had all the cluttered unclean darkness of a factory, with masses of scenery stacked all about, and dressing-rooms here and there, and store-rooms, and property-rooms; and in the back, in a cleared space, the stage.

The quiet, milky burning of long tubes of light, set in frames, drew me toward the rear. I went and stumbled on a scene in rehearsal. The light turned every face into a sort of sickly green bronze, quite startling. The actors looked like bronze statues in motion.

The director stood before them, beside the camera on its tripod. The scene was a rich parlor, with heavy hangings, mirrors, and artistic furniture. At a little table, sat a doll-faced, light-haired woman, soft and spineless, but very pretty. Over her stood Roland Welles, in evening clothes.

As I approached, the director shouted:

"Say, Ro, take the ramrod out of your back! Bend, man; bend!"

I was shocked at the tone of discourtesy, almost of contempt. But at the same moment, Roland wheeled around.

"I'm not made out of rubber!" he snapped.

I can hardly describe how I felt, how endangered were all my ideals by these few words; the sense of personal shame and anger I felt; the sense of tears. But at the same time, Roland saw me approaching, and stiffened even stiffer than before. He was put out, confused, uncertain. I hardly knew whether he was going to back away or come toward me.

Suddenly, he came to me; and the blonde lady, turning, saw him, saw me, and rose. She looked from one to the other, and caught my eyes. I looked back, my soul bared, I fear, and my love for Roland shining in my eyes. She made a movement forward, as if to cover Roland, and he confronted me, abashed.

"How did you get in?" he asked, not even calling me by name.

"The girl told me to come."

"You shouldn't have. We're in the middle of a scene. This isn't allowed. Please go. I'll write to you."

He said all this in an impersonal way, as if he were ordering his dinner. The blonde woman stood beside him. He turned to her.

"This is Miss Moreland, Alma. Miss Audrey."

I nodded. She nodded. I turned.

"I'm very sorry," I said, and then walked slowly away, trying to keep from falling.

I don't remember leaving the building. I don't recall having passed the telephone girl with her impudently curious stare. When I came to myself it was to find myself on a shabby, dingy street, filled with cheap, smelly shops, and thronged with untidy, foreign-looking women with dirty children clinging to their skirts. They, too, stared at me curiously. I was as completely lost as if I had been in some strange, foreign land.

I turned helplessly to an old woman wearing a wig which could never have been intended to deceive anyone still having the gift of sight.

"Would you be good enough to tell me where I am?" I asked. "I fear I am lost." But she only laughed stupidly in reply.

I looked about me for some street sign that would give me some clew to what part of the city I was in. I was vaguely frightened, I

scarcely knew why. But, on reaching the corner of the street where the sign should have been, I found nothing that could help me. To my great joy, I saw a policeman approaching. I could have thrown my arms about him; never had I been so glad to see the uniform before!

"Oh, please, Officer! Can you tell me how to get to the ferry to ——? I have quite lost my way."

"I should say you had!" He smiled down at me in a paternal fashion from his great height. "Why, if you went one block further, you'd be clear to the river. And it's the other river you'll be wanting. Now, look here, young lady, the best thing you can do is to walk down this avenue for four blocks. You can get a car there that will take you clear across town, and you'll only be a short walk from your ferry then."

I thanked him warmly, but hesitated a minute before making my next request.

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" he asked, noting my embarrassment.

"Are you going down that way? Might—might I walk down with you?" I stammered. "These people look so queer. I'm afraid of them!"

"Sure you can," he laughed. "They do look a bit queer until you're used to them. But you'd be perfectly safe in the daytime, anyway. They're mostly Wops and Kikes," he assured me.

I hadn't the most remote idea to what nationality "Wops" and "Kikes" belonged. I was perfectly willing to believe that they would do me no harm—but I availed myself of his permission to accompany him, nevertheless.

Once at the desired corner, he waited politely until my car came in sight. I gave him my best smile, by way of thanks.

Once on the car, I resolved to put all thoughts of Roland's treatment of me out of my mind until I was safely locked in my own room. I knew that no effort of mine would keep the tears back once I were to give myself up to thinking of that dreadful scene in the Studio. Fortunately I had my part for the coming play in my little handbag. While it was not very long, I had found it "tricky" as I glanced through it. I was not naturally a "quick study." I had constantly to fight against a tendency to put the author's ideas into my own words. Besides, I happen to have a rather large vocabulary of my own—

always a stumbling-block to an actor when learning a new part.

By an effort of will, I fastened my attention on the task before me, and had the satisfaction of feeling that I was "letter perfect" in my part by the time I reached home. I blessed the chance that had made me carry that wretched part with me. Without it, I would surely have broken down long before I reached the safe shelter of my little room!

Once behind that locked door, a perfect tempest of tears swept over me. How could he have been so cruel, so heartless! How could he have humiliated me so—and before that other woman! I saw the smile on her thin lips now. I stopped pacing the floor to look at my swollen and tear-stained face in the mirror. Could that grief-ravaged face be the same that had smiled so happily at me from that same glass only a few short hours before? Oh, Roland, Roland! Did you realize that you were breaking my heart?

But, gradually, as the first violence of my grief spent itself, I began to make excuses for him. He couldn't have meant to wound me so cruelly. He had been thoughtless, had spoken hastily without at all meaning that I should take him literally. He, himself, was

upset. I should have remembered that. That ill-mannered director had spoken to him in a way that would irritate any man of any sensibility whatever. I had come at the most inopportune moment possible. He would apologize and explain it all at our next meeting. Our next meeting! When and where would that be? I, certainly, would never again find the courage to go to see him. It must be he that would seek me.

But even while I was making excuses for him, as a woman always does and will continue to do I suppose, until the end of time, for the man she loves, deep in my heart there lingered a tiny seed of doubt.

Doubt fought with me all that night. My intuitions whispered the truth to me. But the next morning there was a letter from Roland, a letter full of remorse and sweetness.

"You know our temperaments," he wrote. "When we are in the midst of work, we fly off the handle. I am ashamed. I kneel at your feet. I kiss your hand, sweet Nella. It was base of me. Miss Audrey scolded me after you left, for treating you so summarily. I deserved that scolding. Will you hold me as a friend? Unfortunately, we have been

ordered on tour, and we will be away for some months. But I shall write to you, and as soon as I come back, shall look you up. If then, you still want to go into the movies, perhaps there will be an opening. You are very beautiful, Nella!"

So, he would be gone. Better so! It would give me time to make something of myself; to study, to rise, to become a real actress.

Fortified with this resolve, and with a heart much lighter than it had been since my unfortunate trip to Roland's Studio, I set to work with all the determination that was in me. I think I have told you that I have a strong will, and perhaps I have already been able to show you that this is so. Every night when I went to bed, I said to myself: "Remember, Nella, that you are going to become a great actress!"

And how I worked! But even with all my work, I feel sure that I should never have accomplished my end if I had not *willed* that it should be so. I made it a sort of act of faith, a sort of prayer. Every night, as I say, before going to bed, I would stand in the middle of my tiny room and say aloud, "You are going to be a great actress, you are going to be a great actress!"

Sometimes it happened that I was so exhausted with the long rehearsals and the two daily performances that I would forget to repeat my formula until I was actually in bed and on the point of dropping asleep. But no matter how tired I was, no matter how cold the room was, I forced myself to get out of bed again, to take my stand in the middle of the floor and to say, "You are going to be a great actress!"

Does all this seem very childish to you? Somehow, I can't think that it was. At any rate, I feel sure that it was my salvation. It certainly helped to keep the end I had in view constantly before my eyes.

I sometimes wonder who writes the stories about actresses who suddenly spring into fame. Always, at least in the ones I have happened to read, they work away, playing small parts and "under-studying" big ones until suddenly the Star is taken ill, or meets with some accident. Called upon at the last minute to play the leading part, they make a sensational success. After that, of course, all is easy.

While I have no doubt that this does occur, why does not someone write the story of a young woman who slowly works her way to

the top and holds her position because she has thoroughly learned her business from the ground up? I am sure this is oftener true than not; particularly of the actress who has gained her experience in "Stock."

Of course there is the other way of which we all know, and the way in which the general public takes the most stock—through favoritism. But I can honestly say that favoritism had little to do with my success; rather, it held me back. But of that I was unconscious for some time.

Our company was not a large one, and before the winter was over, one of the women resigned to join a company somewhere in the West. Partly owing to that fact, and partly owing to the sensational success which I had made in my début with Kitty, who, incidentally, was a prime favorite with her public, I was gradually advanced from "utility parts" to parts that gave me some little opportunity to show what was in me. There was a general impression with the management that comedy was my "line," although I, myself, felt sure that I would "arrive" in emotional parts, if at all. But I suppose one always feels that unless the natural gift for comedy is unusually marked.

Let me say in passing that, although I managed to maintain friendly relations with all of the company, I was on terms of intimacy only with Kitty. It was Kitty who first gave me a hint as to why my progress was so much more slow than I felt it ought to be.

As in all stock companies, particularly in a small town, we soon got to feel that we had an almost personal relation with our audiences. This was largely because we had so small a public to draw from. A large part of the seats were sold by subscription for the entire season. Before long, I grew accustomed to looking for certain faces in certain seats. We were always able to "spot" strangers.

A strange man, particularly if he had an orchestra seat, always caused the greatest excitement in the company. We were always convinced that some great New York manager had taken the trouble to cross the river to see the performance. Perhaps Opportunity was knocking at our door. What castles in the air we built with a strange face for the foundation! It is needless to say that each one of us was on his mettle on such occasions. I, too, caught the infection. To act on Broadway became my dream, as it was

that of every member of the company. What a triumph that would be; to have Roland Welles find me on Broadway on his return!

My first taste of real success—for I was sensible enough to realize that my success was largely a matter of accident—came when I happened to be playing a small part in an old-fashioned melodrama. The part, in itself, was worth little. But I had a short scene where I was supposed to fly into a rage over a supposed slight at the hands of my lover. Prompted by a spirit of mischief, I had carefully held myself in at rehearsal. I was adequate, no more. But on the opening night, I let myself go. I had only to recall some of my stormy scenes with my foster-mother, or with some of my teachers when I was a perfect wildcat, to put myself in the proper mood.

The effect was electrical. Thunders of applause greeted my outburst of temper. One admirer in the gallery even went the length of calling out: "Go it, you little devil! You've got him scared!" Of course that got a laugh. But the scene was fortunately over, so it couldn't be spoiled.

All through the week I got the same round

of applause each night. Of course, I was delighted. But I really believe that dear little Kitty was even happier than I. There was never a more generous person in the world than Kitty! And it was this success that brought me for the first time in actual contact once more with Beaver-Face. Not that I had not seen him constantly about the theater; but beyond a curt nod, he had never acknowledged my presence. His whole attitude suggested that having turned me over to the stage-manager after I had brought him my letter from Roland, his duty was done.

Nevertheless, I was constantly stumbling across him as I came off the stage. More than once, I had glanced aside in the middle of a scene to find him watching me with that same old dying-calf expression which I found so inexpressibly comic. But I think I am within the limit when I say that we had not exchanged above a dozen words since the day I first saw him. I had been a little piqued at first that he had made no comment upon the progress I had made. But I had decided that it was just his way, and had let it go at that. But at the end of the eventful week when I had made my first legitimate "hit," he stopped me after the Saturday afternoon

matinée, just as I was about to go out to supper.

"Well," he said, "so you're not an icicle after all."

"An icicle?" I echoed, astonished.

"Yes," he said. "I begin to think that your coldness is all assumed."

Seeing that I still looked puzzled, he went on: "You know you might get on faster if you were a little more pleasant."

"Why, I didn't realize that I wasn't pleasant," I stammered, blushing furiously for some unknown reason. "I'm sure I always intend to be."

He laughed mockingly.

"Well, you don't think you've been particularly pleasant to me, do you?"

I stared at him without reply. I didn't know what on earth he was driving at. I got back to the theater earlier than usual, having hurried through my supper, and went at once to Kitty's dressing-room.

"What on earth do you suppose he meant?" I demanded, after I had told her of my encounter with Beaver-Face.

"I wouldn't worry about it," said Kitty evasively.

But I was not to be put off.

"But can *you* imagine what he meant by my not being pleasant?"

"He means that you haven't been what he calls 'pleasant' to him," said Kitty in a low voice.

Suddenly her meaning flashed upon me.

"The toad!" I raged. "The miserable little toad! How dare he! Why, if it were to save my life, I wouldn't think of him in that way!"

His "dying-calf" expression came back to my mind. I went into a perfect gale of hysterical laughter. I laughed and laughed until poor Kitty was fairly frightened. She ran out of the room and returned bringing me a glass of water.

"Here, drink this," she said, "and try to control yourself."

"Oh, don't mind me. I'm all right. Only the whole thing seems too perfectly absurd when you think of him! I couldn't be angry if I tried. It's all too grotesque!"

But, all the same, Kitty's words came back to me often in the days to come. And I never saw Beaver-Face without thinking of them. I determined to keep a wary eye on him in the future.

May 18th.

Months passed. Spring came. I was playing excellent parts, but I had not yet played any "leads." The reason for this was obvious. Beaver-Face continued to make it plain to me that I must be "more pleasant." He made it evident that the way up lay through his love.

I was quite indifferent, save that at times he was like a mosquito which I kept brushing away, and his buzzing annoyed me.

Before people, I was always quiet, determined, laconic; but sometimes, when at last I came to my little room, I wept bitter tears, when on one else was near, in the dead of night. I think at such times it was love that kept me alive, as it was love that kept me at my work. I clung to it undaunted. I determined, in spite of everything, to keep everlastingly at it.

Spring came; and wily Beaver-Face, biding his time, kept on with his trivial intrigues. At that time, I took every occasion I could for long walks up the river, along the cliffs. I loved the country.

One morning, coming back through the woods, I looked up and saw a man in the dis-

tance. It was Beaver-Face. I puckered up my nose and thought, "The Pest!" Then I smiled to see how awkward and nervous he was.

"Why, good-morning, Nella!" he said.

I nodded.

"Walking, is it? Suppose we sit down?"

"Oh, no," I said. "I don't care to!"

He drew nearer.

"Now, see here, Nella," he burst out, "how long do you think I can stand this?"

I said nothing.

"Listen," he went on a little hoarsely. "You know you could be a great actress, if——"

He paused. Always this "if"!

Then, before I was aware of it, he had me by the arm and tried to kiss me. It was like blinding light. I awoke as from months of dreaming, and understod fully. I broke loose and turned on him.

"Mr. Snyder!" I cried; "don't come a step nearer!"

He was trembling from head to foot, and swiftly I walked off, never stopping until I reached home. It was only then that I broke down.

May 19th.

I cannot describe now what a change took place in me, what a fury swept me. Laughter and annoyance were gone, and in their place a resolve that I would end all. I felt that that night would be the final night. I nerved myself accordingly. I told myself that I did not care what happened.

Now, it so happened that I was acting in a melodrama, and in the last act I came on with a hidden revolver, and finally shot and killed the villain. I had a box of blank cartridges for the weapon.

But, on the way to the theater that afternoon, I stopped in at a store and bought a box of genuine cartridges. These I took to the dressing-room, and put on the shelf before me, beside the revolver, and the other box.

I was in a high state of excitement; but I was fully determined. At three o'clock my part began. I finished a little after five. Beaver-Face was not in evidence.

This did not surprise me. I knew it was the night that was to be feared. I went out and had supper, came back, made up, and went on. Still no sign of Beaver-Face.

At last the play was over, and still no sign. I went back to my dressing-room and shut the door. I raised the light and sat under it, staring at my pale face, and suddenly I thought of my foster-mother, and her gray eyes, like the eyes of an animal at the point of death. I shuddered, and laid the revolver before me.

Then it came, as it was expected to come—a hard knock at the door.

I leaned forward, putting a cold hand on the revolver.

"Yes," I muttered.

It was the office boy.

"Eh, Miss," he shouted familiarly, "the boss wants you."

"Very well," I said.

"And git a move on!"

I heard his steps die away. Quickly I leaned over, opened the revolver, snapped out the shells, opened the new box, and took out the heavy little cartridges, filled the chambers, and snapped the weapon shut again. Then I murmured, "I am doing this for you, Roland!"

Slowly rising, I put my hand in the folds of my skirt in back.

I went out the stage entrance, down into

the street, then up the front stairs. Quietly I mounted the stairs, and paused before the shut door. There was absolute silence.

"Mr. Snyder!" I said.

He flung open the door, and backed as I swiftly entered. He went to the other side of the table. We stood facing each other.

"Nella!"—his voice quavered—"this has got to end."

"It has," I murmured.

"You know I love you," he burst out.

"If you call it love!" I answered.

"Now, see here!"

"I won't see here! I've 'seen here' long enough. You've hounded me all winter. I've had enough of it!"

Suddenly he started toward me, around the table. I grew clammy cold. I did not move. But my finger was on the trigger of the revolver.

"Nella!" he said wildly; "I can't stand it any more. You've stayed here, haven't you? I know what that means!"

He made a lurch to seize me, and up went my arm, the revolver in his face.

We stood thus a second, and his face became livid.

"I will surely kill you," I whispered.

He gasped, and sank in a chair. My hand fell.

"All right," he said. "You know what this means."

"I know," I said. "It means that I resign!"

And I walked out.

So ended my career on the stage! And nothing lay ahead! Roland was on the California shores, and there was no one else to turn to.

Oh, Mother, it was because of you! The wrong of darkening my girlhood became now a great right! I had lost through you, and I had won through you! Summer is coming; the night is warm and moist. H—— has gone to Maine for a few weeks. I miss him greatly. But do I miss him as much as I miss you, Roland Welles? Even to-night! Even now, after all that has happened! What could have possessed me to love you so? Such love, given to another man, would have transfigured him. Life would be a story of love. But is such a thing possible? And would I have ever done good work, if first my heart had not been broken?

May 27th.

H—— is still away; and it seems to me that I have no one to talk to. So I will go on talking to you, Annette Wilkins, even if you never see this!

Curious! reading back over what I have written, I have to laugh. I've made myself out an awfully tragic young lady, with hardly a smile for years. Of course I've been unfair to myself. There is a side to me that is gayety itself and overunning with joys, and even my most desperate moments seem but the beginnings of new joys! This was particularly true the night I sat in Madison Square Park, among the rest of the unemployed, with no future before me. But let me go back to the point where my career with the Henry Irving Theater ended. I suppose it was the excitement of my last stormy interview with Beaver-Face which carried me through the next twenty-four hours. Strangely enough, I slept soundly all through the night that followed that momentous encounter. And even the next day, in place of feeling worried over the problem of how I was to live, I was all a-tingle with the excitement

of packing up my belongings and getting away.

For, of course, I was going to New York. Not, alas! to play on Broadway as had long been my dream; although I must confess that I did not consider getting an engagement with some Broadway company as beyond the possibilities. The local paper had always been kind to me, and of course I had religiously kept all my notices. I had visions of presenting them to some influential manager, and watching his pleased expression as he read them. You will see that I was quite as green in many ways as I was the morning I had my first interview with Beaver-Face.

I prevailed upon my landlady's son, for a small monetary consideration, to carry a note to Kitty at the theater. On no consideration would I have gone near the building again. I knew, of course, that she would be rehearsing in the morning. But as I remembered that she had but a short part, I begged her to come over and have lunch with me. I simply *could* not leave without seeing her again.

In the course of an hour, my messenger returned. Kitty had scrawled, "Sure, I will," on the back of my envelope. Happy as a child, I ran out to a neighboring delicatessen

shop and laid in an extravagant amount of supplies. All the indigestible things that I dearly loved went to make up that lunch. I had looked in that same window with longing eyes all winter, but had resolutely resisted temptation. But if I died for it, I intended that this should be a real feast!

I had decided, you see, to have lunch in my room. As I was leaving three days before my week was up, and had paid, as usual, in advance, my landlady thawed sufficiently to lend me a table and some chipped dishes. I wanted Kitty all to myself. We would have oceans of things to say, and I suspected that we would both indulge in a good cry. Certainly I didn't intend to cry in public—off the stage!

Kitty came even before I expected her, bearing all sorts of good wishes from the members of the company, all of whom were good enough to regret my departure. At the risk of seeming catty, I will say that I knew that some of the good wishes for my success *in other fields* were not altogether disconnected with the fact that of late I had been steadily growing more and more popular with the audiences of the Henry Irving!

I found to my astonishment that an exag-

gerated account of my scene with Beaver-Face was common property. For this I had to thank my friend the call-boy. He unblushingly confessed that he had been listening outside the office. But, being as imaginative as he was unscrupulous, he had embellished his account by telling that I had actually fired my pistol at the manager, and went the length of offering to show the hole my bullet had made in the wall. I could only assure Kitty that if there were any such hole there, the call-boy had made it after my departure. All the same, I begged her not to contradict the story, although it reflected sadly on my aim!

Of course we both broke down and cried before lunch was half over. Kitty declared that without me life in the company would be perfectly unbearable. With no one else had she ever been so pally. She was most cheering in regard to my future. Of course I would get a good engagement in no time, with my talent and my appearance. But she discouraged my plan to carry my notices to a manager, on the ground that New York managers, like all other New Yorkers, were the most provincial people in the world, and cared nothing for any opinion that came from outside.

But in spite of her rosy prophecies, she did a perfectly characteristic thing before leaving, insisting on my accepting the loan of a twenty-dollar bill until I "signed." How like her that was! Of course I refused. Knowing her salary as well as she knew mine, I could only wonder how she had ever managed to save twenty dollars. For Kitty was never able to save anything, owing largely to her generous heart. I verily believe that everybody in the company, men and women alike, had borrowed money from her from time to time. And I had a suspicion that a large part of her money never came back. After she had gone, I felt unutterably dreary. I had the feeling that I would never again, no matter how fortunate I might be in placing myself, find a woman friend so true-hearted, so unselfish, so big—that's the word. And, indeed, I never have!

A few hours later, I shook the dust of the little town from my feet forever. Acting on Kitty's advice, I had packed in a large suitcase my two prettiest gowns in which I intended to bewitch the managers. My trunk containing my theatrical wardrobe and all the things that I would not immediately require, I left behind me with the under-

standing that I would send for it later. It was many a long day before I saw it again!

Wishing to avoid the expense of a hotel even for a night, I checked my suitcase at the ferry station on the New York side and started to look for lodgings. I had never spent a night in the city in my life. But if I had gained nothing else in my months' experience, I had at least acquired some self-confidence. Certainly I would meet with nothing worse than Beaver-Face!

Kitty, whose knowledge of the "big town" was little greater than my own, had advised West Twenty-third Street as a good place to look for accommodations. She had known several actresses who had found cheap rooms there, in which they were permitted to do light housekeeping. So to West Twenty-third Street I bent my steps.

As I rode across town on the car, I recognized the street as the one I had come through the day the fatherly policeman had directed me out of the region inhabited by the "Kikes" and "Wops." I almost wished I could see him again. Much water had flowed under the bridge since that day! I felt immeasurably older—and sadder!

I was fortunate in finding a room that ful-

filled all requirements, at a modest price suitable to my slender purse, not far from the corner of Eighth Avenue. It was in the back of the house on the ground floor. As I listened, the noise of the street came to me in a sort of muffled roar which I did not find at all disagreeable. The room was furnished with heavy, old-fashioned furniture which must have been very handsome in its day. But its chief attraction was that it looked both clean and comfortable, even "homey." And I took to the landlady as well. She was a middle-aged Swedish woman who, like the furniture, must have been very splendid in her day. But it was plain that Life had dealt hardly with her; her big blue eyes looked as if she had cried all the color out of them. But the way she bustled about to make me comfortable went to my heart.

Like the reckless thing I was, I made up my mind to wait at least a week before looking for anything to do. Remember, this was my first real holiday for ages. Anyone who has ever worked in stock knows how exhausting it is both to mind and body. I had luxurious visions of lying in bed as late as I liked, untroubled by thoughts of rehearsals; of spending long afternoons going about looking at

the pretty things in the shops—I am not one of those persons who cannot enjoy seeing things because I cannot hope to buy them—and of going each evening to the theater. Julia Marlowe, Maude Adams, John Drew, I would see them all for the first time in my life. It would be a new and delightful form of study to watch these great ones of the stage and learn, if possible, the secret of their success. For I was not silly enough to believe that I had yet learned even the A B C of my art.

What a happy, care-free week I had! I have never had one quite like it since. I lazed about deliciously until afternoon, puttering about doing odd bits of sewing and repairing for which during the past year I had never been able to find the time. I even bought some pretty, light material and made myself a new gown which turned out to be a great success. Indeed, if my landlady, Mrs. Burkstadt, could be believed, I had only to wear it when I went to see a manager, and I would be able to make my own terms.

Of course I had told her all about my hopes and fears. She was the sort of person in whom one just has to confide. When she saw me strutting before the mirror in my new

creation, the tears came into her poor, faded eyes.

"People said that I was pretty, too, long ago," she sighed, "although no one would believe it to look at me now."

"I'd believe it," I cried warmly. And I added, "I think you'd be handsome yet, if only you looked a little happier."

She only shook her head sadly by way of reply.

When it came to going to the theaters, I lacked the courage to try to get in on my "card" as I had heard some of the women in the company speak of doing. I felt that I should die if I were refused. And refused I almost certainly would be. Who in this great beehive had ever heard of Nella Moreland, an obscure member of an obscure stock company in a little hamlet across the river?

Besides, I had made up my mind to ask Mrs. Burkstadt to go with me. I felt a strange timidity about going about at night alone. I didn't feel that it was quite "nice." I would certainly look more important if I had such an imposing looking duenna. Then, too, I had a genuine desire to bring a little pleasure and gayety into her drab life.

Any doubt that I might have entertained as

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to whether she would enjoy it vanished, the minute I proposed my scheme to her. Her face lighted up like a child's, to cloud over again almost instantly. She thanked me very much, I was very kind, etc., etc. But she really couldn't accept. I had the most dreadful time getting at her reason. As I more than half suspected, it was because she didn't have a decent rag to her back. She admitted having more than one trunk packed with old things. But they were all hopelessly out of style. The boys on the street would hoot at her if she were to appear in any one of them.

After a tremendous amount of pleading, I prevailed upon her to let me see some of them, reminding her that she had already praised my skill as a dressmaker, and declaring that the only way to prove to me that she had meant what she said, was to let me "build" a new costume for her out of these relics of bygone splendor.

Half an hour later she appeared in my room, her arms piled high with costumes of every description. There were walking-costumes, afternoon costumes, all of beautiful materials, and several really splendid evening-gowns, in addition to several opera-cloaks.

"These all came from the old country, mostly from my dear Sweden," she said. "And these," pointing to two of the evening-gowns, "were made in Paris. They were for when I was first married!"

I feared she was going to burst into tears, so I hastened to admire them, holding them up one by one. I did not have to pretend. Considered as fabrics, they left nothing to be desired. But she certainly was right about fearing that she would excite remark if she were to appear in any one of them on the street. As I looked at them, I could only think of some old fashion-plates that I had seen in the property-room at the theater. Heaven knows what exact period they represented, but they might to all intents and purposes have been made before the Civil War.

However, this circumstance only served to fire my dressmakerly pride. Having learned that Mrs. Burkstadt had no objection to my doing anything I pleased with her finery, I set to work with a will. I decided on a rich brown velvet, which would set off her still abundant blonde hair and stately figure. I laughingly insisted that she should restore the other things to their hiding-place, explaining that I was only human, and that if she

were to leave them with me, I would be sure to decamp in the night taking them all with me. I feared that she was deficient in a sense of humor, for she only smiled slightly at my attempted pleasantry and went thoughtfully out of the room, carrying her rainbow load.

The next two days we were as busy as beavers. I found that Mrs. Burkstadt could sew very well if she had someone to direct her. She only lacked initiative. The time passed pleasantly. Beguiled by my eager interest, she told me tales of her happy girlhood and her life in her dear native land. She insisted on my taking all my meals with her while we were at work, which I was only too glad to do. Eating alone, even at the best restaurants, has always seemed to me a dreary ordeal. I am not at all sure that it is even more dreary at the cheap ones I was obliged to favor with my patronage.

I would have felt fully repaid if I had been put to twice the trouble when my landlady came into the room in her new dress the night we eventually went to the theater. No girl could have asked to have a more well-bred and dignified duenna. I surprised more than one admiring glance sent in our direction as

we took our seats. And I was not vain enough to appropriate them all to myself.

How dissipated we were for the next week! The theater to me was a perfect delight, doubly so, because my companion seemed to derive an almost equal amount of pleasure from it. Remember, that I had never before seen a really first-class company in a first-class theater. The scenery and costumes were a perfect revelation of what could be accomplished with money and taste. Only one who has acted night after night with the same old tawdry sets, one indoor and one outdoor, which had to do duty for everything, from a nobleman's house to a peasant's cottage, can understand my feelings. And as for the costumes! Think how beautiful they must have seemed to me who was compelled to frequent the second-hand stores, and patch, and piece, and cut, and alter even then!

I dreamed at night of acting in such companies as I had seen during the evening. How could anyone help acting well in such surroundings? While I still humbly acknowledged that I had nearly everything to learn, I grew more and more confident that all I lacked was time and opportunity. How I would work, if my chance ever came. And

it should come—if mere willing would bring it. I lived during this time in a sort of waking dream. The days served only as intervals until the hour struck when we could go to the theater again. But by the end of the week I had a more or less rude awakening. Having put off the evil hour, I forced myself to take stock on Sunday morning. There was no doubt about it, I must get to work, and that soon. My slender stock of money was getting alarmingly low.

I do not like to think of the discouragement of the next few weeks. Later on, when I had nearly lost all hope, it was less hard, somehow. Day after day, dressed in my simple little home-made dresses, I went from theatrical office to theatrical office, hoping to get some manager's ear. But, as far as I was concerned, the New York theatrical manager might have been a myth. I never even saw one at a distance. There was always the same half-polite, half-mocking office-boy who looked me up and down with his prematurely shrewd and appraising glance, only to inform me that Mr. So-and-So was engaged, or out, or, worse still, had made all his arrangements for the coming season.

I realized, naturally, that I had selected—

if I could be said to have selected it—the worst possible time of year for getting an engagement. Summer was at hand. And, at the time of which I write, the New York theaters did not make so many important productions as they do nowadays, nor did the season begin so early in the fall. Even if I could have found an engagement for the coming year, it would have been something to bank on. I might have contrived to earn enough some other way to carry me through the summer. There must be somewhere I could utilize my musical gift, or even my knack with my needle. At the various theatrical agencies I met with the same disheartening luck. I was utterly unknown. I learned to be unknown was the worst and most stupid crime that one could commit. In vain I asked myself how others got their start. Some of the present-day stars must have been unknown at the beginning. But to this question I found no answer. I began to believe that no one had ever heard of the little town where I had served my apprenticeship, nor of the Henry Irving Theater, nor even of Beaver-Face.

But at length I *did* find one man to whom my late manager was not unknown. He actu-

ally seemed to take some slight interest in me; questioned me as to how long I had been with the company, and as to what sort of parts I had played. He did not seem to think it of any great consequence that I had never played "leads." He took down my name and address, and promised to let me hear from him. For the first time for days, I went home with a light heart.

I told Mrs. Burkstadt my good news. I could not have concealed from her if I would the fact that I was fast getting discouraged. She had seen enough of the seamy side of life herself to enable her to read the signs of failure. Fortunately, I had always been able to pay my room rent promptly. Rather unwisely I had kept my large room, foolishly choosing to practice my economies in other directions. I had become an adept at choosing the most filling dishes, as well as the cheapest. But either the food I selected was not nourishing or the anxiety under which I labored prevented their proper assimilation. I was daily losing flesh and color. One morning, when the warm sun was streaming into my room, I actually saw that those disfiguring lines known as "crow's feet" were beginning to form round my eyes, which looked

larger than ever in my pale, drawn face. I hastened to improve my appearance by throwing myself on the bed and crying until my poor eyes looked like boiled gooseberries! Needless to say that I did not present myself at anyone's office that day. I waited for ten days. Every time the postman's whistle sounded on the block, I was down at the door to meet him. But no word from the friendly agent. How hard hope dies! With each fresh disappointment, it flamed up anew. Next time, I would surely have news. But when day followed day without bringing me anything, I concluded that the letter had been lost or misdirected.

On a day of driving rain, I presented myself once more at the office. The manager was out, no one could say exactly when he would be back. Mumbling that I would return, I went out again into the wet streets and managed to pass a half hour over a cup of tea in a Childs restaurant. When I returned, he had not yet come back. I waited another dreary hour, and went home desolate.

I went five different times with the same result. The office boy and the stenographer looked at me in a peculiar manner, or I fancied so. Not the least of the demoralizing

effects of ill luck is that it gradually makes one suspicious of all the world. On the last visit, the manager being still out, a statement which I had long ceased to believe, an unsealed note was handed to me by the grinning boy. I am still convinced that he had already made himself master of its contents.

The gist of it was that I need not trouble to call again. The report from my former manager had been exceedingly unfavorable. In view of said report, the manager regretted that it would be impossible for him to place me. In this fashion Beaver-Face was taking his revenge.

It was all I could do to hold back my angry tears until I reached the shelter of the house. The coward, the coward! The unspeakable sneak! I had mad thoughts of arming myself with my revolver and storming his office again. Only this time, I would do more than threaten! I laughed mirthlessly when I thought of how gray his pasty face would turn when he saw me. Of course when I had passed through my first fit of rage, I saw how useless such a course would be. But I found a childish pleasure in conjuring up pictures of his terror for days after my rebuff.

And all this time, no word from Roland.

Of course, I tried to make all the excuses possible for him. He was pushed for time and driven with work. He was about to return, and expecting to find me still at the Henry Irving, had planned to go over there to surprise me. Or, no doubt, he had already written me there, and Beaver-Face had intercepted the letters. But in my heart I realized that these were idle excuses. *I* would have found the time to write, no matter how busy. And if he had written to the theater, Kitty would have seen the letters in the rack and forwarded them on to my address. I *knew* that he had not written, only I wouldn't let myself believe it. The thought of going over to the X—— Studio occurred to me more than once. But I was partly restrained by the memory of my last disastrous visit, partly by pride, and partly because I was unwilling to believe that he could have returned to town and made no effort to find me.

It must not be supposed that during all this time I had confined myself to looking for work at the managers' offices and the agencies. I searched the papers daily to find advertisements for pianists wanted to play either for dancing classes or for movie houses. I even, at Mrs. Burkstadt's sugges-

tion, inserted a modest "want ad." of my own. To this I received but one reply, from a dancing "Professor" near 125th Street.

When I went to the address given, I was much taken aback to find that the professor was an ebony-colored negro. The inference, of course, was that his pupils would be of the same race. However, I would have taken the place had I been able to qualify. But the professor's standards were far too high for me. He wanted to know with what dancing academies I had been connected, with what teachers I had studied, and if I were familiar with the modern dances. I was unable to give satisfactory replies to any of these questions, as a matter of course. I offered to play for him, and assured him that I would very quickly learn to play any new music to his complete satisfaction. It was no use. He advised me to begin with some more humble establishment, and had the impudence to tell me that after I had become more proficient he might find an opening for me.

I suppose I ought to have been both angry and indignant. But he was so ridiculously pompous, and used such extraordinary words

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without any comprehension of their meaning, that I had the utmost difficulty in keeping my face straight. Once more in the street, I enjoyed the most wholehearted laugh that I had had for weeks.

I don't know what I would have done all this time if it had not been for my good landlady. I was the only woman lodger in the house; the rest being, for the most part, clerks who worked in some of the shops in the neighborhood. I had made up my mind that I could no longer afford to keep my large room, to which I had become singularly attached. But I had no idea of leaving her. So I went to her and explained frankly that, until something turned up for me, I should be obliged to use the utmost economy, and asked her to let me have a smaller and cheaper room, even if I had to go to the top of the house. She assured me that every room was taken, but added that, as my room was very hard to let, she would be more than glad to let me have it at the price of a smaller room until such time as she should be able to rent it at the full price.

I reluctantly consented to this, on the understanding that she should let me know at once if anyone applied for it. It was not until

long afterward that I learned, quite by accident, that at the very time she was telling this pious lie, she had several vacant rooms, and that she had frequent inquiries for just such a room as the one I was occupying at less than half price, all of which she generously refused to avail herself of.

I had long since ceased to patronize even the cheapest restaurants. A bottle of milk from the dairy, a box of crackers, a little oatmeal which I cooked on the gas ring, made up my bill of fare day after day. Lack of proper nourishment and the daily succession of disappointments—for I still continued to haunt the agents' offices, where I sat for long hours in company with other anxious-looking applicants—were, doubtless, the causes of my wakeful nights.

For the first time in my life, I tasted the horrors of insomnia. Hour after hour, I would toss restlessly from side to side, staring out into the black darkness, which seemed less dark and impenetrable than the darkness that was closing in about my life! I had reached the stage where tears no longer brought relief. I had the numbed feeling that I had reached the limit of my capacity to suffer. Only death remained, and death, that

would put an end to all my troubles, could only be a relief.

Of course I drew great satisfaction from the thought of Roland's remorse when he would return to find that I had died from heart-break and starvation—and all for lack of a helping hand! I had drained the cup of suffering. Life could strike no further blow. But it was not long until I knew better. One morning as I was about to go out on my usual rounds, Mrs. Burkstadt met me at the door. As it chanced, I had not seen her for several days. She had left a note in my room saying that a matter of business would keep her away from the house for several evenings. As I, myself, was out nearly all day, the evenings were the only time we had for seeing each other at all.

"Can you come down to my room for a while, or have you any pressing engagement for an hour or so?"

"No," said I, I fear not without a dash of bitterness, "I have no engagement with anyone, and it doesn't look as if I ever would have."

"Don't say that, my dear. You are young, and have your whole life before you. I am sure that there are many, many bright and

happy days before you. Life cannot be all disappointment for any of us. Even I, an old woman, find that after all I have something to live for."

"Oh, have you had some good news?" I cried delightedly. "I am *so* glad."

"Thank you, I have. It is that I want to tell you about."

She led the way down to the basement, where she had her own rooms, and I followed eagerly, all my own troubles forgotten for the moment.

The hour lengthened itself until well into the afternoon. There was so much to tell, so much to hear. We stopped only to get a bite of lunch.

Mrs. Burkstadt, it seemed, had a son who from his childhood, almost, had been possessed with the very demon of restlessness. Nearly fifteen years before he had suddenly taken it into his head to go West.

From time to time, at long intervals, he had written her briefly, rarely twice from the same place. He seemed to be constantly on the move; always hoping to better himself by making another change. Finally the letters ceased entirely. Her own letters came back unclaimed. She had spent every cent

she could scrape together, employing detective agencies in various cities, to find some trace of him. She had long ago reached the point where to have been assured of his death would have been a relief. Beyond the fact that he had shipped before the mast on a sailing-vessel bound for Australia, she had been able to learn nothing.

And only a week ago had come the news that he had prospered in that far-off land, that he had a home waiting for her—it appeared that he had never married—and that he had settled down for good, his days of wandering over. As a sort of proof of good faith, he had sent the money to pay for her ticket out to San Francisco, from which port she was to sail for Melbourne.

She did not need to tell me how these belated tidings had changed her whole outlook on life. She looked younger, happier, and, yes, handsomer than I had ever seen her. Only the fact that her lease had still two years to run had kept her from starting at once. But at length an agent had arranged to take the lease off her hands. The first of the month she would be free to leave.

In the meantime she had two things to propose to me, one of which, she admitted, she

was holding in reserve. But the one that immediately concerned me was that she wanted me to help her get ready. Remembering what she was pleased to call my genius at turning hopelessly old-fashioned garments into gowns that looked as if they had come fresh from the dressmaker's hands, she wanted to turn me loose among her various trunks, to let me run riot among her hoarded treasures. And for this she insisted on paying me by the day, and boarding me, as well as lodging me besides.

It is needless to say that I was only too glad to accept her generous offer. Not only would I be sufficiently occupied to take my mind off myself and my troubles, but I would actually be earning a little money besides. For the next few weeks I was happier than I had thought I would ever be again. It all brought back vividly the time when I had first come to her house, filled with ambitious plans, with no thought that the future was to hold nothing for me but disappointment and disaster.

Certainly, no single letter ever brought greater cheer to two lonely women than did that letter from Australia. We became positively gay. And, in spite of my protests,

feeble ones, I fear, for I was hungry to go, we went several times to the theater; this time, of course, I was the guest.

How the lights, the music, and the bright scenes brought back all my desire to act again. If only I could find the way to get a hearing! I actually began to hope again. My state of mind did not escape Mrs. Burkstadt's keen eyes. For several days she talked of little else than the theaters in Australia. In a new country like that, her son had written that there was a chance for everyone. For several days she talked of little else. She was sure that out there a young and beautiful girl would meet with instant success.

I didn't dispute the matter. But what of it? Probably there were also golden chances in the moon. I could quite as easily go to the one as to the other. Then, came the second proposition. I can only say that it was characteristic of her generosity. I was to go out with her. Her son had sent more than sufficient funds for a first-class passage. She had made inquiries, and had found that we could manage for very little more to go together, second class. She wouldn't mind in the least, as long as I was with her. And as

for any objections he might make—well, the thing would be done before he found out about it.

What could I do but throw my arms about her and cry, and tell her that she was the best and most generous soul alive? But, of course, I couldn't even think of it. She did everything in the world to persuade me; used every argument in her power.

She even went the length of confessing that all her talk of the easy and sure success that awaited me on the Australian stage had only been a blind. She wanted me to go out to marry her son. Knowing him as she did, she would never feel sure that he was really settled until he had a wife. And where in all the world would she find a daughter-in-law so dear to her as I had become?

It was quite useless to try to point out to her that her son might not consider me the paragon that she evidently did. She stubbornly replied that she knew his tastes in women too well to have any doubt as to the outcome, once I burst upon his dazzled vision. And, then, there was always the stage to fall back upon, in case he should have suddenly lost his eyesight!

While I never considered this wild plan

exactly seriously, I will not say that I did not think of it at all. But you, Annette, have already surmised that it was the thought of Roland that did more than anything else to hold me back. What was the love of the best man in the world, what was safety, what was security for the future, what, even, was a successful career, when weighed in the scale against the thought of Roland and his love!

And so we parted. I simply couldn't find the strength to stay to see her off, selfish as it was in me. I pointed out to her that she was going towards happiness, and the fulfilling of the dream of her life, while I was still facing uncertainty. I had found a dreary, unhomelike little room further downtown. I felt that I could not bear to stay in the neighborhood, I would leave the day before she was to start West.

So we had one last "spree" together, which included a supper after the theater. Afterwards she insisted on driving me to my new lodging, which had the one merit of being of the cheapest. We kissed and embraced in the shelter of the cab, and, half-blinded by tears, I ran up the steps of my new abode, let myself in, and dashed up the stairs to my room. I didn't even light the light, but undressed with

the aid of the dim illumination which was furnished by a friendly lamp-post in the street below. In consequence I did not notice a small trunk which stood at the foot of my bed.

The next morning when my eye fell upon it, in spite of the fact that it had a vaguely familiar look, I supposed that it had been left in my room by my predecessor, or had been carried there by mistake. On speaking of the matter to my new landlady—a woman with a sour, almost forbidding expression—she assured me that all she knew about it was that it had come addressed to me early the evening before. My name was on a card attached to one of the handles. Then I knew why it had looked so familiar. It was one of Mrs. Burkstadt's old trunks, of course. I ran upstairs to open it. It was filled, not only with the gowns I had particularly admired, but with some lovely new materials as well.

Some of my costumes which have been most admired were made from the things in that trunk. They are the only ones I can never bring myself to give away.

I will hurry over what remains to tell of this wretched period of my life, and come to the night when, both hungry and homeless, I

found myself in Madison Square Park. As you can easily imagine, I was more desolate and lonely than ever after the departure of my last friend. My days were occupied with the same dreary round of the agencies. Whether Beaver-Face had been inspired to extend his evil activities to the extent of damning me at the other offices, I cannot say; but certainly it seemed that I was treated with even less consideration than formerly. I may have imagined this, but I think not.

I had succeeded in getting a little sewing to do from the woman who had taken over Mrs. Burkstadt's house on Twenty-third Street. Probably she was inspired to send for me from something that my former landlady had said of my skill. I never had any gift for bargaining. Doubtless she knew enough of my circumstances to feel sure that I could not refuse any offer she might make. At any rate, she drove a hard bargain with me. I was to take the work home and return when it was finished. I was grateful for that much. It wrung my heart to even go to the house.

Tuesday, my room rent was due. I was obliged to ask for a few days' grace, explaining that I would not be able to finish the work

I had on hand for another day or two, exhibiting it as a token of good faith. With every sign of unwillingness, this short respite was granted me. Just before dinner-time on Thursday evening, I had finished.

Dressing myself in a plain, dark street suit, I went over to Twenty-third Street to deliver my work and get my money. I had just twenty-five cents in my purse. I had calculated that even the small sum due me would pay for my room and leave me enough money to barely keep life in me for a few more days. I could only hope that there would be some more work waiting for me. But when I arrived at the house, I found that Mrs. Fisk had gone out to dinner with some friends, and was to go to the theater afterwards. Surely she had left some word for me, or the money for my work? No, she hadn't said anything. The servant seemed genuinely sorry for my disappointment. Couldn't I come back the first thing in the morning? The mistress was always up and downstairs by eight.

I asked if she had laid out anything more for me to do. I had a faint hope that if I carried more work back with me to show to the woman at the house, she might accept my explanation for returning empty-handed. I

had, unfortunately, met her in the hall on my way out, and promised her the overdue money on my return. No, there was nothing. Probably, Mrs. Fisk had not expected me until the end of the week.

Half-blinded with tears, I found my way down the steps to the street. The tears came so easily those days. Probably because I was half starved. What was I to do? Go back and face that woman, I couldn't and wouldn't. And then I remembered that I would either have to go supperless, or use a part of my last quarter for food. I had long since grown accustomed to dining off crackers and milk, which I kept in my room for that purpose.

Too numbed to think clearly I turned into Eighth Avenue, and walked on until I suddenly felt that I could not walk another step. The sign on the lamp-post told me that I had walked as far uptown as Fortieth Street. Near the corner was a little restaurant. I simply had to sit down somewhere. I went in and asked for a cup of tea and some slices of bread. I saw by the fly-specked bill-of-fare that toast, which I secretly longed for, was five cents extra. I could not afford that.

I dawdled as long as possible over my meal. The tea, bitter and badly made as it was, put

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heart into me. By the time I had finished, I had made up my mind to return to Mrs. Fisk's house in the neighborhood of eleven. I was sure the maid would let me wait. On her return, humiliating as it would be, I would frankly explain my situation. Surely, she would understand it. How could she help doing so? And even if she were annoyed at my disturbing her at so late an hour, and never gave me any other work, I couldn't help it. The immediate future was all I had strength to cope with. I only lived from day to day!

It lacked ten minutes to eight when I came out of the restaurant. What was I to do with the long three hours before me? I simply hadn't the strength to walk about until eleven o'clock. Then I grew reckless. I would spend another five cents—my dinner had cost me ten—and buy an elevated ticket. If I rode to the northern end of the line, I could simply walk across the platform and come downtown again. By repeating this maneuver at the Battery, I would thus make the complete circuit. Just how long that would take, I had no idea; but certainly it would consume a large part of the time that I had to kill.

The ride was positively restful. I had been

fortunate enough to secure one of the cross seats next the window. I could rest my head against the window-ledge and look out in the warm dusk at the varied pictures presented by the lighted windows of the houses along the route, as we flew past.

How unconcerned the people who live on the streets along the elevated railway seem at the publicity they are forced to endure. I suppose the explanation is that one can become accustomed to anything and everything. I would catch a fleeting glimpse of women preparing dinner; probably for a husband whose work lay far from his home. In another house, children were being put to bed. How did they ever manage to sleep with that constant rattle and bang in their ears! I presume the answer to that question is the same as to the other.

As we waited a moment at a station, I saw a man enter his door and tenderly kiss his wife, who held in her arms a sleeping baby. Again, my eyes were stung by salt tears. Only a moment before, I had been wondering how people could live under such conditions. Would that woman have changed places with me? I think not.

When I had at last made my round I found

that it had taken longer than I thought. While still much too early to hope that Mrs. Fisk would have returned, I made up my mind to go back to the house and wait for her. Everything on the first floor and in the basement was in darkness. On the upper floors, some of the lodgers were evidently at home. I rang the bell nevertheless. After a long interval, I rang again, a little more sharply this time.

After what seemed a very long time, the door was opened by a young man, evidently one of the ones whose lights I had seen in the upper floor. He was not over-pleased at having been disturbed. He had on a pair of old slippers, and was without collar or tie. On learning my errand, he assured me that Mrs. Fisk and the servant were both out. He declared, quite properly, that he could not take the responsibility of letting me in. He was good enough to say that he had no doubt that I was a friend of the landlady, still I must understand his position in the matter. I could only assure him that I understood perfectly, and that I would return later. My errand was very important.

Without any clear thought of what I was to do, or where I was going, I walked on once

more until I found myself at the Park. I selected a bench under one of the lights which happened to be vacant, and sat down to wait. I suppose it was because I was utterly exhausted both in body and mind—I had had nothing but that miserable cup of tea and bread since breakfast—that I became perfectly unconscious of the time. I did not happen to have chosen a seat where I could see the clock. When I did get up to look at it, it was nearly one. It would be madness to think of going back at such an hour.

Most of the people who had been sitting in the Park when I arrived had gone home. Those who were left were apparently, like myself, homeless outcasts. But I was too well dressed not to attract attention—if for no other reason. I grew cold with fear as I became conscious of the curious glances cast at me from time to time. One young woman, leaning on the arm of her escort, made a remark that brought the blood to my cheeks, as she passed the bench on which I was sitting.

Presently an officer, who had passed my bench several times, came to a halt before me. I saw several of the other "benchers" straighten up to listen to what he was going

to say to me. It was evident that he was going to say something.

"What are you doing here, young woman?" he asked, not unkindly. "It's time you went home. This is not a place for a girl like you. Besides, it's against the rules."

"Why more against the rules for me than for these other people?" I asked.

"Well," he said. "I kind of wink at their being here. They haven't any place to go to."

"Neither have I," I said with a sort of despairing boldness. "I couldn't get in my lodging-house if I tried, at this hour. Besides, some money I was expecting didn't come. I'm a week behind in my rent."

For a moment he stood hesitating. Then his hand went toward his pocket. But I forestalled him.

"Thank you, just the same," I said. "But you know there isn't any respectable place would take me at such an hour. Even if I had the money, I couldn't go to a hotel alone at this time of night. You know that. Why can't I just stay here?"

"It isn't safe, and it isn't re——"

"I know it isn't respectable." I finished

his sentence for him. "But you must see that it's more respectable than walking the streets. If I can only sit here until morning, I can get the money that's owed me. I'll go as soon as it's daylight, and walk around until she's up."

"Well," he grumbled, "I suppose I'll have to let you, since that's how it is." He went away. But at intervals throughout the night, I saw him at one end of the Park or the other. Several times he passed my bench, but he did not speak to me again.

The night did not seem as long as one would have imagined. I never closed my eyes an instant. Apparently another of the rules which was more strictly enforced than the one about sitting in the Park, was against falling asleep. I derived considerable amusement from watching the devices employed by some of my ragged neighbors to avoid the appearance of slumber while snatching a little repose. The favorite and most effectual was to sit with a piece of newspaper in one's lap, and appear to be reading it with a devouring interest. Probably as a result of long practice, they always seemed to wake up while the officer was still some distance away. When he arrived, even the ones who had been

sleeping the most soundly, were always absorbed in their papers once more.

Dawn found me both cold and stiff; I had, besides, that feeling of discomfort which comes from not having taken off one's clothes. Mindful of my promise to the indulgent officer, as soon as it was fairly light, I left the Park. In an all-night restaurant I had a cup of hot coffee. Having "broken" my last five cents, to buy a morning paper, I made the reading of it an excuse for remaining at my table until I could venture to present myself before Mrs. Fisk.

Our interview was a stormy one. The young man from upstairs had told her of my late call. I expressed my regret, but explained that in the circumstances there was nothing else to do. I even told her, perhaps foolishly, of the manner in which I had been compelled to pass the night. But instead of expressing any sympathy for a condition for which, after all, she was solely to blame, she became violently indignant. Like the officer, she assured me that my conduct was far from respectable, only she was less kind. In the end she paid me my money, assuring me that she never wished me to show my face in her house again. But having my money, I cared

for nothing else. I was even extravagant enough to ride home in a street car. After my experience with Mrs. Fisk, I thought it more prudent to lie to my landlady. I expressed sorrow that I had not been able to pay her the night before. Told her that I had just missed finding my employer, and that I had spent the night with a friend.

How good my poor little room looked! And, oh, how luxurious to be able to have a refreshing bath and to get into some fresh clothes! On the way home I had bought two eggs, which I boiled over my gas-jet. Never did eggs taste better. I had still a little money in my purse, so I felt positively hopeful. Besides, I had come to a resolution. I would put my pride in my pocket and go over to see if Roland had returned, or if there was any news of him. Surely, he must be coming back soon, and surely, he would find some way to help me.

A few hours later, with a sort of last-stand desperation, I went over to the X—— Studio.

Two automobiles were shining in the glorious spring sunlight before the factory building, and a group of poor "supers," those tag-end actors who fill in and are mobs, lounged, waiting, round the doorway. The entrance

hall, too, was crowded, and buzzing with talk and motion. The telephone girl recognized me and smiled.

"You want to see Mr. Welles?" she asked.

I nodded. Her grin spread.

"Well, take a look around!"

I turned on my heel. He was standing behind me, smiling delightfully. I must have blushed with rosy happiness—a flood of glad relief and bounding joy and unquestioning adoration. He was leaning over me, holding my hand.

"Good work!" he said. "It's good to see you. How goes it? How's Beaver-Face?"

I laughed.

"I've left him!"

"Left him? How so?"

I looked around quickly.

"Well——" I hesitated. "You see—so many people here."

"Come in. Follow me."

He swung open the door and I followed. This was heavenly! Suddenly the future opened for me again; I found a place in the world, and all my despair vanished. But what a change in Roland! To begin with, there was a transformation in his clothes; a change of quality—curious patent-leather

shoes with cloth tops, a very fancy vest, rings on his fingers, an immaculate suit of some special weave. But more emphatic, a change of manner, a new dominant quality, an extra self-satisfaction, and business-like precision.

I followed him to "the floor," and then up an extra flight of stairs. We passed through a dark hall and he opened an office door.

He turned toward me, smiling.

"This doesn't look like a dressing-room, does it?"

"No," I said.

I had a glimpse of a business desk, rug on floor, pictures on walls, a couch, and comfortable chairs.

"Can you guess?" he asked.

I was puzzled. He motioned me to a chair, and I sank into it. He, himself, sat at the desk, and wheeled near me.

"Nella!" he said; "Nella! I'm so glad to see you. I was going to write to you. I just got back two days ago. Things have changed! Things have changed! You, too. You've become very beautiful. You are growing up."

I smiled through my tears. I clasped my hands together. Didn't he guess even then how I loved him?

"So you've left Beaver-Face. What happened?"

I turned away my face and told him the story. When I had finished, he smote the desk with his fist.

"The beast!" he snapped, his forehead taking a deep groove down the center. "You should have left him long ago. If I had known that when I sent you there. By Heaven!" He paused, and looked at me strangely. "Pointed a gun in his face, eh?" He laughed queerly. "So that's what you do when men make love to you! Hm! Hm! You make me afraid of you!"

I smiled at him.

"Afraid?" I echoed.

"They call you 'The Little Panther,' don't they?" He moistened his lower lip with his tongue, a characteristic and not unpleasant trick of his. (Have you ever noticed it, Annette?) "Phew! It's hands off! You're the most different sort of girl I've ever met!"

Doubtless that fascinated him, for he kept regarding me in a puzzled way. I understand now what was troubling him. I did not dream of it then.

"Listen!" he said suddenly, leaning toward me. "I said things had changed. Can

you guess how? Why, Nella, I've been made a director, and, if you want a job, say the word!"

So that was it. Another actor had moved up a peg. That was the reason for the change in his clothes, his manner, his office. I laughed, delighted.

"I'm ready," I said. "Shall I begin now?"

He wheeled to his desk and pulled out his script, looked over the scenes to be taken, and the list of characters.

"Of course," he muttered, "I can't star you yet. You'll have to make good first. But there is a little love part in this; fellow loves a country girl, leaves her, comes to the city. One scene in cottage, another out in the woods. 'Stepping-Stones'—that's the name of the thing. You see, the boy is offered a place in his uncle's great business, and marriage to an heiress; so he leaves his first love, comes to town, rises, loses his soul, and only in old age goes back to the country. Then you've become old, too. But someone else will have to take that part. You could hardly look old, Nella!"

We both laughed. An actor looked in at the door.

"Ro, all ready, and the camera-man cussing."

"All right!" he said, rising and putting on his hat. "Let me see. Grab a ribbon somewhere and pin it on that hat, so that you can swing it on your arm! Hustle, now!"

I tore after him. All was excitement, all was joy. I could not believe in my luck. Not only a job—and in the movies;—but a job with Roland as director! I kept laughing under my breath. It seemed now as if I had been waiting all my life for this!

I was in the street, then Roland helped me into one of the automobiles, and a girl next to me loaned me a ribbon. Soon we were off, scooting through the city.

I must confess right now that Roland made an excellent director. He put aside everything personal when he was directing a picture, and flung himself body and soul into the work. We took the scene in the Park; left the automobile in one of the drives, made a procession on down a lane to a rustic bridge, and finally located among the rocks and the little waterfall below this bridge. A crowd gathered at once, lining the bridge and the paths.

There were stepping-stones along the edge of the waterfall, and it was on this perilous

brink that we were to act! I began to be a little self-conscious. That crowd watching, the open air, the feeling of no stage backing me up, the thought that I had to make good with Roland directing me—all this unnerved me. Roland stood on the left bank beneath us. He spoke to the young man who loafed beside me.

"All right, Jim. Get out on that third stone there. Now, remember, you're coming one way, she the other. She gets stuck halfway across. Up you come, and offer to help her; you take her hands, you draw her near; she almost loses her balance. Then you kiss her. And, before she knows it, you have her across. Put some love into it, and some snap. Go to it!"

He crossed over; I gingerly took my place on the center stone. And, all at once, I realized what was happening, and I knew that my love for Roland was going to make me spoil the scene! How *could* I make love with someone else, and right before his eyes! Awkwardly, I balanced myself on the stone, expecting every moment to make a misstep, and topple down over the rocks.

Jim was a competent actor, but he evidently felt that he was dealing with a stick,

for when he came to seize my hands, he paused, blank, gazing at me hopelessly. Then he tried to draw me near, he tried to kiss me, and, involuntarily, I turned my face the other way. I grew red, and felt tragically awkward. Roland lost his temper.

"What's the matter with you?" he snapped. "Love, Nella! Can't you love?"

We tried again. And now the tears flooded my eyes. To fail before him! To fail at this test! Was all over already?

"Say, you two—Jim! Act, man, act! You've lost your ginger!"

"Say, Ro," muttered Jim, "sorry; but this girl don't respond—begging your pardon!"

Roland dashed up the rocks and crossed the stepping-stones, his face darkly angry.

"Get out of this!" he said to Jim, and sent the young man flying past me, almost throwing us both into the water.

"Here, now, Nella, let me show you!"

His frown was unpleasant; and the scowl on his face troubled me deeply, more deeply than my failure. He leaned forward, and lowered his voice.

"I'm surprised at you!"

My cheeks were burning; I wanted to run away. But he took my two hands, and, faint

with love of him, I stood there, turning away my head.

"So," he said, drawing me close. "So, for Heaven's sake, feel it! You're in love—first love—It's a life and death matter—You've come through the woods—The time is spring—You're meeting him, here—It's the most wonderful moment of your life. Lord, Nella! Haven't you ever loved?"

I smiled, trying not to cry, and then he kissed me, and I lost my balance, and I heard him laughing as he pushed me up on my feet.

"Better to fall and break your neck," he said, "than to limp through it!"

Down he went again; Jim took his place, and I did my best.

"Well," said Roland, sighing. "Let's take it."

The camera-man put his hand on the handle of his machine, screwed up his forehead, and eyed us keenly.

"Go to it!" shouted Roland, and then the clicking of the camera began.

Twice, the picture was taken; once for the foreign market, once for the American. Roland did not speak to me on the way back. I knew he was angry and disappointed, and I burned with shame.

May 28th.

I will skip the blackness of the days that followed. I have written enough already about such things. To sit about in the warm Studio all day, waiting and waiting, with the clamor of the carpentering in one's ears, the dazzle of lights, the scenes that come and go, the buzz of voices, the motion of people. To spend the nights in a lonely hall-bedroom, the window open and the city clanging and rumbling and pushing all through the sleepless hours. To eat in miserable little dirty lunch-rooms, among the flies and the lardy smells. To feel shut out of the presence of him you love, unnoticed in the throng, discarded. But there, that's enough; there was one other ordeal I must mention. I laugh at it now, but then it was tears and sighs.

Thursday evening I was allowed to go down to the "try-out." The new pictures, their many scenes pasted together in their proper order, were to be run off before the manager, the directors, the actors, the clerks, and the rest of the force, in order to see whether they were successful or not, and if not, what changes were to be made.

This is always an intense evening, for slips

of paper are passed around, and a vote taken on each picture; a vote on the acting, the photography, the directing, etc., etc. On these evenings actors are made or unmade.

But that evening! We went crowding into that hot, black room, which seemed quite unventilated. At one end was the screen, at the other were tables on a platform for the directors. Between the two, we actors and others sat on benches. In an asbestos box behind the rear wall, with an aperture for the beam of light, sat the operator with his projecting-machine. The lights went out; we were hushed, and the pictures flashed before us.

My picture came last, "Stepping-Stones." I felt blinded. My heart thumped, and I was in no frame of mind to judge of its merits. Dizzily I sat there, while that impossible thing unwound, scene after scene. But when at last I saw the waterfall, and saw, opposite Jim on the stone, an awkward, dark girl that missed the kiss, I turned my face away in disgust, and did not watch the film any more. All was lost.

But I was not dropped, after all. Almost I wished that I had been, for Roland had no further use for me. But a Mr. Clay, a feeble

and gentle man, one of the directors, allowed me to play trifling parts—mere "super" work—for which I drew about two dollars a day. Black days, those! So near to Roland, so far away from him! Never further than then!

May 30th.

I hardly know how it came about, but some months later, Roland began to notice me again. He would stop and nod and smile; he would pause to ask me how I was getting along. Besides, my acting was beginning to improve, and Mr. Clay was warm in my defense. Finally, Mr. Clay gave me a fairly good part, and I carried it off with spirit. The vote was the highest of the evening. The manager, himself, congratulated me. And Roland stopped me in the hall to shake hands and commend me.

"There!" he said. "Now, you're showing yourself!"

The following week, he cast me for a good part in one of his own films, and soon I was working for him regularly.

His whole attitude changed, and I was made aware that he was falling in love with me. But I see now what infinite tact he used, how carefully he worked, with what restraint and patience he made his advances. I have a shrewd suspicion that he never could forget that I had almost murdered Beaver-Face.

During the autumn, we had several little confidences. He loved to talk his plans over

with me; to sit in his office and "dope out" coming plays, and I was always eager and proud to help him.

And then, one Saturday he asked me if I would walk along the cliffs of the Hudson with him on Sunday afternoon. I was overjoyed. I met him at the ferry, and we went across the river. We climbed the long hill; we passed down the leaf-carpeted paths in the autumn woodland. Now and then, the bold sky looked in from the East, and we had a glimpse of New York, shining on its hills, a white city, over the waters. And we went on, near each other, wandering slowly, lost in a sweetness of intimacy and low-voiced talk.

He went over his next week's plans in some detail. He seemed heavens away from love-making—until we came to a little pond among the turning leaves, and the falling leaves, and the leaves that had fallen.

One old maple leaned over that pool, and he paused beside it, and poked up dead leaves with his cane. I called his attention to the beauty of the pool, sky-still under trees and skies, deep with the colors of the woodland, hushed as a mind at peace, that reflects and holds the world.

"Yes," he murmured, "if only *our* minds, *our* hearts could be like that!"

The poetry of this thrilled me. He towered above me, in one human shape, all I adored, all I reverenced! He was my faith in life. I believed now in life and in love, because I believed in him. I stood trembling. The woods were very quiet; we seemed lost in a far wilderness, where no city marched, and there was no care, no toil, no bitterness. Softly the leaves fell upon us. A few birds fluted. The pool lay still.

"Nella!" he said—and the very sound of his voice stabbed me! "Nella! It seems years since I wanted to say something to you."

I turned a little toward him. He turned and looked at me. I could not bear his eyes, and glanced down. Then he reached and took my hands, dropping his cane.

"You don't know how beautiful you are—and how wonderful! Nella—Darling!" He drew me a little closer, and my eyes went blind. I searched for his face, and stroked it gently. Fear had left me. Suddenly, and with a cry, he drew me close, crushed me to him, and through my lips went a sigh of all the sweetness and poignancy of life!

"Nella—this is love—I never knew it before—my heart and soul are lost—Nella!"

I felt his arm around my shoulder; he had one of my hands in his; my face lifted; and closer we drew—and we kissed.

Later, on the way home, he said we were engaged to be married.

I weep now to think how happy I was! Oh, Roland! Roland! How could you throw away heaven and earth, as you did?

May 31st. Dawn.

I have not slept a wink since I wrote those last words a little after midnight. For hours, now, I have lived back in those days of wonder, those days of rapture.

Four days in heaven—and then the sudden end!

I was sitting alone in my little dressing-room, almost ready to go on. I really looked radiant that day; I remember even the dress with distinctness. It was a pale-gray and pale-pink satin, gorgeous with rich embroidery. Around my neck was a long string of Oriental beads. My hair was entwined with flowers. I felt like a young queen.

Suddenly, someone knocked.

"Enter," I said, playing the queen.

The door opened slowly and a young woman looked in.

At first I did not recognize her; but after a second, there was no mistaking her. I had seen that pretty, doll-faced blonde before. But where?

I rose automatically, a curious dull ache in my heart. She came on into the room with slow deliberation, and shut the door behind her.

"You don't remember me?" she asked in a cold, hard voice.

Suddenly, I felt a difficulty in breathing; why, I could not have told.

"I don't—quite," I murmured.

"Alma Audrey!" She gave a toss to her head, and calmly sat down in the chair opposite mine. Then, she leaned a hand on my dressing-table, and "took me in" with a hostile and critical glance.

"Think a bit," she urged. "Alma Audrey." She repeated the name slowly.

Then I remembered. It all came back to me in a flash. It was the day I had come over to see Roland from Beaver-Face, and had disturbed and interrupted his scene. And this woman, this Miss Audrey, staring at me now resentfully, had been acting with him. And, even then, her eyes had darted hatred!

"Yes," I said a little sharply, "I *do* remember you. What is it?"

"Oh, ho!" she laughed—exactly as if she were playing a part in a cheap melodrama; "so you and Roland——"

"If that's why you came here," I broke in, "you may just as well go."

"May I? Not so quickly. He belongs to me. He's mine. You see, I just got back

from California this morning; but the whole Studio is talking about it. The nerve of you, butting in like this!"

The panther in me rose. I remember my arms stiffening out, my hands clenching, my feet rising almost on tiptoe. I hate to think what I might have done!

"See here, now!" she burst out. "Do you know what kind of a man he is, anyhow?"

"Will you please leave this room?" I asked, with a forced calmness.

She rose slowly. She even came a step nearer.

"Will you please read this letter?"

She echoed my tone of voice precisely. Her outstretched hand held a letter.

That saved her, doubtless. A letter! I had a moment of weakness, an excellent moment, let me hope. I could not forbear the opportunity; and as she continued to hold out her hand stiffly, I took the document from her.

Slowly I unfolded the paper. Never did I see words more clearly. Never did words mean less to me! But every word was branded on my mind: every word of love; every betrayal of ownership in one another!

I folded up the letter carefully, and handed it back to her.

"What of it?" I asked.

"This!" Her laugh was hard and cold. "He belongs to me, and I am going to keep him. Keep out of this, if you know what's good for you!"

"Leave this room!" I said, taking a step toward her.

She grew pale; faltered, fumbled, turned, and moved away.

"Leave this room!" I repeated.

With a frightened lurch, she opened the door, went out, and slammed it shut.

I followed her to the door, and turned the key in the lock.

Then I sank to the floor in a wild abandon of terrible grief, shame, and humiliation. But I saw the truth clearly. And memories flooded my mind: the way Roland had met me when I first came to New York; his excuses for not taking me on at that time. I saw now, and I understood. It was because Doll-Face was in the way! And then his sending me to a man like Beaver-Face! And then, the day he was so pitiably confused because Miss Audrey stood behind him!

At one blow my faith in life, in love, and in myself was destroyed. All was lost. The wreck was complete.

I pulled some paper toward me; I took a pencil, and I wrote a short note to Roland Welles.

That night I found myself without a job again. And what future now? My only friend, Roland, was mine no longer. Where else could I get work in the city? And what did I care? I did not care whether I lived or died!

Yet, secretly—oh, the shame of it!—I waited the next day for Roland to come to me. I waited all that day. I waited all the next day. And the next! And the only hope left was that *finally* he *would* come!

July 15th.

I am writing these lines among the rocks on the coast of Maine. Under me the blue sea is rising and breaking, and a great sea-gale fluttering my paper, cuffing the high, clover-fragrant grass all about me, and streaming through my long hair. The sun is brilliant to-day, and the horizon clear. I ought to be very happy, but I am not. My feeling of bereavement is such that I can only write, write!

Our company is up here taking some sea-pictures. H—— has been wonderfully kind and attentive to me: like a sensitive and watchful father. His reserve is astounding. I can see how much he loves me. But he is wise enough to see how I am struggling with this civil war within me. Dear, dear H——. If you cannot make me happy, who can?

To-day, in this hard, clear, blue weather, I think of the autumn on the cliffs opposite New York, and the placid pool, and the leaning maple, and Roland, and the kiss. But my mind goes on and on, re-living the dark struggle that followed after I left the X—— Studio.

There is a sickness called "broken heart."

Just what it has to do with that throbbing bird caught in the breast, I do not know. Broken heart, is it! I should say broken life. I should say broken faith, broken ambition, broken joy! It is a sort of living death, in which all has died except yearning, and memory, and pain. I had *that* sickness.

Its first effect was to numb me. I did not care what happened to me. I was listless and silent. Mechanically, just to keep myself alive, I went around to the different studios, and tried to get work. Often I would wait by the hour. But nothing came of it. My name was still virtually unknown. Besides, I was too careless to make any appeal.

Beyond keeping myself neat, I had no interest in how I looked. I no longer asked myself which of my dresses was most becoming. I could not rouse myself to add any of those little coquettish touches to my toilet which come natural to any woman who wishes to please. There was only one person in the world whom I wished to please. And he——!

It was all in vain that I told myself that he had passed completely out of my life. I kept waiting for a word from him. My dream was that he was coming back. And what is my

dream to-day, looking out over the long blue tides of the sea?

Weeks passed, and again my money dwindled almost to the vanishing point. I relearned all those little tricks of utter poverty which I had hoped were behind me forever. I knew exactly how far I could make a five-cent package of crackers go, and how sparingly I could afford to consume my bottle of milk. Naturally, I grew thin and weak. It was all in vain, too, that I told myself that I must rouse myself from the apathy into which I had fallen. I was beaten. I admitted it. I decided to give up and try to get a job in a department store.

The weather was growing cold with touches of bitterness. Then came two days without any food. I recall walking, quite sick, for miles and miles through the city, just to keep warm and forget my hunger. On the second day, my head felt light and queer, and, now and then, I would have spells of dizziness. But I kept stumbling along. Suddenly, I met a woman who had been in the Beaver-Face company! It was the one who had left shortly before I did, to play with a company in the West.

She stopped to gossip, chirping all around

me. She had met with perfectly astounding success. I just ought to see her notices. Oh, no indeed, she hadn't come back East to stay. Just a short holiday, that was all.

It was a good thing for me that I met her. It was like a slap, or a dash of cold water in my face, making me stiffen up, bringing back anger and pride. I brought myself to, in order not to betray my hunger and weakness to her.

"And what are you doing?" she asked. "I heard you'd left the Henry Irving."

I wondered just what she had heard about my leave-taking.

"Out of work, for the moment."

I managed a brave smile.

But perhaps she sensed more. With the greatest kindness and tact she quite casually told me of an artist friend of hers who was looking for a model, "a model who could act." She gave me his address, and recommended that I take some photographs of myself with me.

I thanked her warmly, and promised to follow her advice.

I went directly home. With a new and fierce energy, I dug some pictures of myself out of my trunk, and made a careful selection

of the ones which I fancied might catch an artist's eye.

How I ever got to that artist's studio, I do not know. The city was swimming about me; the houses swaying and moving about; the very pavement seemed to rise and fall like the waves I am looking at now.

But at last I came to the entrance of a brownstone house on one of the side streets near Fifth Avenue. I looked for the desired name. Yes, there it was. But there was no indication of the floor on which I was to find him. I had to climb four long flights, stopping on each landing to scan the names on the various doors, to the top floor. It took me a long time to do it. And I brought up finally, panting, under the skylight of the upper hall.

I stood there, trying to balance myself, trying to conjure up a smile, trying to show myself at my best. Then I knocked. There was no answer. I knocked again, louder this time. The door was suddenly flung open, and a troubled-looking man in a long, loose artist's coat, and a little cap perched on his heavy thatched hair, peered out at me.

"What do you want?"

His tone was brusque.

"I want work as a model," I gasped.

"Haven't got any. Sorry!"

He started to shut the door. Then, in a flash, I realized that if I were shut out, the end had come. My whole nature rose in revolt and appeal. I held out my hands filled with photographs.

"But look!" I cried. "Only look at these!"

He was startled. He stared at me. He seemed to see me for the first time. He scratched his head thoughtfully, gave me a sidelong look, and took the pictures. He told me afterward that in that sudden appeal of mine, he saw the very character he was looking for.

"Come in," he murmured.

As I started to obey, the whole world grew black before me. The next thing I knew, I was lying on a couch, and he was bending over me with a glass of milk.

"There," he said kindly, "drink this. I've put a dash of brandy in it. That's all you need."

I drank it. Then I shut my eyes. A tide of happiness and sweet comfort swept over me. He disappeared for a moment through

a small door. Presently he was at my side again.

"You'd better eat this, too," he said. It was a hastily made sandwich, bread and butter and meat. I obeyed him eagerly.

I began to weep like a child. The tears ran down my face. Then, after a long time, I looked up. He was standing there, his blue eyes full of pity, his rounded, jolly face full of sadness. It was a long day since I had met with such kindness.

I was able to give him a smile.

"How did you know," I murmured, "that I was starving?"

He smiled too, and gave a wave of his left hand.

"See it every day," he said briefly. "You're not the only girl in New York walking the streets hungry. I've usually got a bunch of them, keeping my stove hot. Someone's got to feed them!"

It was true, as I learned later. Often he gave a girl a quarter to tide her over. And hardly a day passed that some poor, frail, weakened child did not come fluttering in out of the great and over-prosperous city.

Ah, Annette, if you should ever read this, brood over this part of my story. Many and

many a girl has to go through this kind of experience on the way up. Remember, and do not get much beyond this stage!

When I, at last, was strong enough to rise, I found myself in one of the queerest and most delightful places you can imagine. Mr. Morey had two rooms and a kitchenette. The inner room was under a large skylight; the rear room looked out through two windows at back yards. Both of them were cluttered and crowded with relics and curiosities, giving all the atmosphere that we connect with the word "Bohemian."

Very diffidently, he pressed a half-dollar into my hand.

"This is payment in advance," he said a bit awkwardly, "for your work to-morrow. Be here at ten!"

"Oh, thank you," I began, my eyes blurring once more with tears.

"That'll do," he said shortly. "Ten to-morrow."

And he opened the door and almost hurried me out.

It was an entirely different girl who appeared promptly the next morning. Indeed, so afraid was I of not being on time, that I found myself outside the building a good half

hour before the hour set for my appointment. But I did not mind having to wait. At five minutes before ten, I climbed the stairs once more, this time with a step that was almost light.

Not that I was much happier; but a certain hard strength had come into me: a determination to begin the battle all over again. It was the old fighting quality which has never deserted me for long. There was a dawning, too, of something quite new, which was to affect my whole future; a sort of insane recklessness. I no longer cared, because my heart was broken. I craved wildness to drown the memory of it. I was ready to risk my life at a moment's notice. I had the feeling that it would be glorious to die, caught in some immense peril.

But here comes H——, with the whole company, clambering up the rocks and hallooing to me. I must stop for now.

The same. Night.

Alone again. Up in my own room. The window looks seaward, and I can hear old ocean roaring. How cold the nights are up here! But to my story.

Mr. Morey had set up his easel near the curtains that hung between the two rooms. On it stood a fresh canvas. He greeted me, his lips smiling around the big pipe which he was puffing.

"Ready?" he asked.

"All ready," I smiled.

"Then sit down a minute. This is a story I've got to illustrate for a magazine. I'll read it to you, so you can see what the part is."

He read it to me. It was the story of a woman whose husband is unfaithful to her. At its climax, the wife, passing accidentally through the dining-room, parts the parlor curtains, and, peering in, sees her husband kissing the other woman. The wife withdraws, turning back quickly. That was the moment Mr. Morey had chosen to illustrate.

I listened with breathless attention. And, as he read that scene, another, long forgotten, flashed into my mind.

I was fifteen again. I was just coming into the old kitchen at home, filled with its soft shadows and lighted by the little, red-hearted stove. A sort of reddish lightning came into the room from the mills, and by this reddish lightning I saw my foster-mother leaning against the window-sill.

Then, she was binding me to her with her arms, and telling me her secret, and I was slipping to her feet, clutching at her hands, as if to keep from fainting. And I knew what she felt: and now, at this moment, I knew it again!

I waited for no more. I interrupted Mr. Morey suddenly in his reading.

"I can act that part!" I said.

He looked up, startled at my tone. He studied my face for a long moment.

"By God! I believe you can. Go ahead!"

Ah, it was only to live over once again what once had happened. I ran to the curtains, I drew them together; then I peered through, and stood frozen.

"Oh! Oh!" I gave a sigh that was hardly more than a breath. "My husband!—Oh!"

I turned, reeling. I supported myself with the curtains. Then I looked at Mr. Morey for approval.

"Hold it!" he cried. "Keep that expression if you can!"

He was greatly excited.

I "froze" it, as it were. He seemed thrilled beyond words. He was all activity. He fetched his pot of paint-brushes, and his palette, and his tubes, in a sort of ferocious speed of excitement. He seemed bristling with inspiration. He fairly flung himself into his chair, and painted as if his life hung in the balance.

After what seemed a long while, I grew so stiff and sore that I felt I must break. But I held on doggedly until I *could* not bear it any longer.

"Please, Mr. Morey——" I said.

He stared at me. Then he laughed.

"I'm a fine one. I forgot all about *you.* Sit down and rest."

I sat down perfectly limp. He stood over me, studying me.

"Miss Moreland," he said, "do you know that you are a great actress? I've never seen anything like this, never! How long have you been acting?"

I told him. He urged me to go on. I told him my story, all about my adventures with Beaver-Face and my fruitless efforts to find

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BLANCHE SWEET

work. But of Roland Welles I said never a word, although I did tell him that I had tried the movies. He listened attentively, always puffing at his pipe.

"You're too good for model work," he said at last. "You've got to get into the movies again."

For several minutes, he paced up and down the floor, pondering deeply. Suddenly his frown vanished, as if by magic. His face was lighted by a smile.

"Why," he laughed. "I've got it. I must bring H—— down here to meet you. He is a friend of mine. He's in the Y—— Studio. When he sees this picture, and then sees you, well!—It's all over but the shouting!"

Three days later I met H——. He came down in the afternoon. My first impression of him was of a rather slender man, not much above middle height, with clear blue eyes and light hair, a quiet manner, and an expression that seemed to indicate a victory over himself, after much struggle and suffering. From the very beginning, I felt that he was one of those who would understand; that he was good, and true, and leal. Dear H——!

He looked attentively at the picture. Then he looked at me. He asked me a few ques-

tions about my work at the X—— Studio. Then, he said:

"How soon could you come to me for a trial?"

"Whenever you want me—since Mr. Morey doesn't seem to want me any more!"

I smiled archly at my good friend.

We made an appointment for the beginning of the following week, and he went out smiling gently at me.

"Well," said Mr. Morey, "everything's all right again, isn't it?"

I seized both his hands, and pressed them warmly. I could have hugged him! Perhaps I should have done so!

"It's all due to you," I cried warmly.

"Nonsense!" he laughed. "You've got it in you, you've got the power, that's all. This will put you where you belong. But I'm sorry to lose such an exceptional model," he added a bit ruefully.

A great resolve took shape in my mind there and then: to sail right in and beat my way to the very top. No risk would be too great, no effort too costly, no struggle too burdensome. It did not matter anyway; I did not care what happened to myself, so I might as well succeed as fail. At least, fighting

overwhelming odds, I would forget myself. I would escape from my troubles. So I thought; but now, I have ceased to think that.

I hear the great ocean pounding on the cliffs, and I recall those lines of Tennyson's "Break, break, break":

"But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me!"

July 21st.

Well, blank paper, must my poor pen trudge on? Yes, it must trudge on!

The studio where H—— ruled was a little outside the city: a blessed relief from the dust and noise and overpowering stoniness of the streets. I had no sooner entered it than I had the feeling that I had come to brightness, and business, and joy. There was something clean and big about the place, too. It had been especially built for the taking of pictures, and its main floor was under an immense sloping glass roof that flooded the whole place with light.

But better than all else, was the homelike atmosphere; the sense of harmony that existed between the players and the directors and even the stagehands. I saw at once how different the manners were as compared with the X—— Studio. At the former, there was roughness and vulgarity, quarreling and bitterness. But here there was a certain comradeliness, a certain peaceful quiet, a certain sense of earnest work.

The telephone girl sent me right in, without any delay, under the big glass roof. A

number of "sets" were standing across the vast floor. The carpenters and painters and property-men all seemed to be very busy. Here and there lounged groups of actors and actresses, in their various costumes, ready to "go on." It was a bright and busy scene, full of animation and interest. I felt on the instant that I had "come home."

H—— was sitting at a little table before a set which represented the interior of a telegraph office of a railway station. He was giving some directions to one of the property-men. He was saying that he wanted real glass in the windows, in order that it might be shattered later on. I learned later, that he always gave the greatest attention to the most minute details. I never saw a man more absorbed in his work. I stood, unnoticed, at his side for some time, not caring to disturb him, greatly interested in watching him, and noting his methods.

At last he turned and saw me. He looked a little wearied; but he smiled.

"Oh, good-morning," he said pleasantly, rising to shake hands, "I didn't know that you had come.

"Monday morning!" he went on with a sigh. "Everything at sixes and sevens, of course.

But I'll see what there is for you. In the meantime, let me introduce you to the others."

Then, patiently, he took me around and introduced me to one group after another. They were all very courteous and friendly; and with one exception, I took to them all, at once. The exception was, of course, a woman; moreover, it happened to be one of the leading women. Her name was Laurie Lawson. I recognized her at once, for I had seen her in many and many a picture; a very capable young woman, but not entirely sympathetic, not wholly lovable. And who can finally succeed without that subtile quality of sympathy?

She was tall, slim, with light hair, and a sharp expression on her face. But it was a face with much regularity of beauty, albeit, it was too hard. She dressed with a certain "chic" that was arresting.

"Oh," she said tartly, taking my hand, without making any attempt to really grasp it, "glad to meet you, I'm sure."

How I hate limp and expressionless handclasps! H——'s hand always seems to tremble, even though he grasps mine so vigorously.

She was not glad to meet me, and I knew it. Our eyes met for a single instant, and we hated each other with all our hearts. A base trait in me, perhaps, to hate people so quickly and easily. But I *do* seem to sense people when I meet them—sometimes! Hm! There was that first meeting with Roland, for instance! Excellent intuition that! I have to smile at myself. I wonder if I am at times conceited, forgetting all my mistakes, all that has happened.

Well, H—— took me completely around, and finally I met the costumer, and the cashier, and the deft head-painter, and the chief electrician, and saw the bright little dressing-rooms, and even was permitted to peer into the "Star's" dressing-room—the very one which, later on, was to be my own, which is my own now.

All of which being accomplished, I had nothing to do but sit around and watch and wait. But I was not at all averse to this. The whole studio seemed a glad discovery to me. It was so entirely free, to all appearances, from the sordidness that I had been accustomed to. Even the manager, an alert, sharp-eyed man, clean-cut and tall, and who never let a scene be photographed until he, himself,

had witnessed the final rehearsal, impressed me favorably.

I think that while watching, that day, I began to understand, for the first time, the *art* of motion-picture making. It is unlike most other arts: it is much more social. Into the making of a picture go the harmonized efforts of the author, the manager, the director, the actors, the camera-man, the electrician, the property-man, and the manufacturing department.

Each department is dependent on the other; and not even great acting can save a picture, as it can save a play, if the camera, or the lights, or the development of the film goes wrong.

The pictures of the future, the great pictures I dream of, will be the product of bands of artists, working together in perfect harmony and accord, as worked the old cathedral builders in the Middle Ages. It will be an art that will require coöperation, and brotherhood, and mutual understanding, as well as unremitting effort and enthusiasm!

H—— understands this. He has done much to make the Studio what it is, and, by his gentleness and tact, and never-failing good-humor, has brought about a spirit in

the place which often accomplishes wonders.

One of the joys of the place was the noon-day lunch which was served free of cost to all the actors and employees alike by the company. We had to stand in line—the "Bread Line," someone laughingly called it —and come, one by one in turn, to the window where the sandwiches and coffee were doled out to us. And, in the pause from work, we all found corners among the scenery and the props and the multitudinous furniture to sit in, where we could all "fall to" in comfort.

As it chanced, there was no work for me that day, nor for the two following days. But H——, whenever he met me, smiled, and told me to be patient. In the meantime, I found a quiet little room, wonderfully clean and neat, not far from the Studio. I moved in at once. Thus the new life began.

July 27th.

Back in little old New York! Back in my dear old dressing-room! And so glad to be here, where I can let loose my hair, and sit in my kimono, and take comfort generally. And right beside me, the great Studio still and vacant, and the night as hot as blazes! But I am wide-awake. I feel that I am going to write a lot to-night.

It was three days after I came here that the excitement began. I can't really say that I was happy. Coming here had been a great relief. I had found a place in the world again. But I still carried with me, in my heart, that "sobbing something" (Bah, what a phrase! But I can't think of a better!)—that desperation and ache, and yearning. Yes, that still swept over me like a wave, threatening to drown me; a bitter thing, that made me wild. Not the wrong he had done me, not the faith he had broken, but my unquenchable desire for him, and my longing and my hope that somehow he would come to me again, that any day I might see him once more. And then, I would forget my scruples, and meet him with outstretched arms! I

hated myself for my weakness, while acknowledging it!

It was on the third day that H—— sent for me. I mounted the little iron staircase, and climbed to the upper floor where he had a delightful cubby-hole of an office. In it I found three other girls—and one of them was Laurie Lawson.

H—— turned from his desk as I entered.

"Good-morning," he said. "I don't know whether you will be interested, but—have a seat!"

I sat down. We all waited. I was conscious that Laurie Lawson was watching me maliciously, and I turned my head away. Then I noticed that H—— was troubled. He picked up his script and glanced at it, then cocked his head a little.

"I'm up a tree," he said, "for I've got a scene here that involves real danger. It's not the sort that I like to take, because I don't think we have any real right to demand anyone's putting himself in actual peril."

He paused and looked at us all a little helplessly.

"Here's the story, or, at least, here's the scene: Lizette is the station-master's daughter. She has a lover, Ben, who insists on

coming to see her by way of the long trestle that spans the river. She is in constant fear lest the express will run him down some day, for he always comes when his work is over at six o'clock, and the express is due shortly after that hour. They have had several quarrels over the matter.

"But every day Lizette goes to the trestle to watch for him. Finally, one day, when he is just about half-way across, he waves to her as usual. In watching for her to wave back, he makes a misstep, falls through, and breaks his ankle. He falls in a heap. The express is coming in the distance. Get the point?"

We got it. I had a mental picture at once of Roland falling in a heap—the lover for whom I was waiting so long, so long—and I scrambling across the trestle, lifting him, getting his arm about my neck, and dragging him over the ties. Nearer and nearer came the express! Could we make the bank in safety? Then, confusion, and we rolling down the embankment. Perhaps—— I was thrilled. I sat breathless, my fists clenched.

"You see," he went on, "it's a real risk. So I'm not going to cast anyone for that part. Instead, I'm going to ask for volunteers. Who'll do it?"

There was absolute silence. The girls looked at one another. Two of them smiled. H—— looked at Laurie.

"Of course, the part belongs to you, Miss Lawson, if you want it. But I won't feel at all hurt if you refuse it."

That was fair.

"Well," said Laurie, "I can't say it appeals to me."

"Very well," he said. "Who then?"

I waited, my hands clenched. Neither of the other girls spoke. Then I murmured under my breath:

"I will."

He glanced at me sharply, slowly smiling.

"All right," he said. "We'll go out this afternoon. Wear a country dress, a sunbonnet over your arm."

Laurie Lawson gave me a glance, as she passed me on the way out of the room, that was probably meant to break my heart. But since it was already broken, no damage was done.

Well, I gloated all through those hours of waiting, positively gloated. I hoped I would be killed. I was in a dare-devil frame of mind, and thrilled to think that I was going

straight into the path of an oncoming train, I had not, I realized afterward, taken the man who was to play "Ben" into consideration.

At two, we started in two great automobiles. All the arrangements had been made in advance with the railroad company. We went out through the bare country, by many winding roads. There was a sharp quality in the air that sent the blood racing and tingling through my veins. I was fully ripe for any adventure. Beside me sat "Ben," a very handsome young actor. He expressed the hope that someone would see to it that the coming of the engine was well-timed! I resolutely fastened my mind upon the story I was to act; tried to put myself in Lizette's place, to follow her in her various emotions. Otherwise, I knew that my thoughts would go back to that other ride I had taken, also with the making of a picture in view; that dreadful day of my début in "Stepping-Stones," when *he* had been the unwitting cause of my failure and humiliation. After many turnings and twistings, as if it could not make up its mind just where it wanted to go, the road began to run close to the railroad tracks. Soon after, we

stopped and got out, and climbed the embankment.

The two cameras were set up down the tracks, in order to get a front view of the train coming in the distance beyond the trestle.

We stood around in a group. The trestle was long, single-tracked, without path or railing of any kind. Far below it, one could see the river flowing rapidly. The current was very swift. One could hear it eddying in the crevices of the shore. The whole scene seemed bleak and a little depressing. H——, standing in the center of our group, was visibly nervous.

"Listen very carefully, all of you," he said, with just a touch of sharpness in his tone. "Eddy (that was "Ben"), first you go over to the far end of the trestle. Then wait there until you hear the engine whistle sounding three times. Start right then. Walk slowly; don't get flurried. And don't wave until you get a little more than half-way across—out there where that little post is. See it? Then *you,* Miss Moreland, wait until you see him fall before you start. When you see him struggling to regain his feet, start at once, but deliberately. Remember to keep your

eyes on the railroad ties. If you make a misstep, you are sure to fall. Keep your nerve. Go to him, lift him, put his arm around your neck, and come back quietly, and not too quickly. You'll really have plenty of time. If you don't, I'll shout through the megaphone, and then——" He paused, and drew closer to me.

"Can you dive?" he asked.

I laughed under my breath.

"I'll dive!" I assured him.

"Whatever happens," he went on, "don't either of you look round. Just jump the bridge into the river. Otherwise, keep to this side, and then roll. Just roll as quickly as you can, down the embankment. So!"

He gave a sigh of relief, and looked at his watch.

"We have about ten minutes," he added.

He looked very pale. But Eddy, in a charmingly reassuring way, slapped him on the shoulder, saying:

"All right, old man; we'll make it!"

Then he started over the trestle.

It seemed to take an infinite time, as he went from tie to tie, walking a little gingerly. But finally he reached the far side, and stood there, waving his hand. H—— waved back.

"And now, Miss Moreland, will you take your position?" said H——.

Never, in all my life, did I feel more self-possessed. I went slowly toward my post at the end opposite where "Ben" had taken his stand. I stood on one side of the track, leaning forward, handkerchief in my hand, ready to wave when my cue came. I heard them fussing with the cameras behind me. I heard H——'s voice, low and troubled. And I also heard the river, far below, eddying in the crevices of the shore. I was ready. But where was the train?

Suddenly, as if in answer to my unspoken question, came the call. Three long blasts in the distance, muffled, yet echoing through the countryside.

"Ready? Start!"

It was H——'s voice.

I looked up. I saw Ben coming toward me over the trestle, head bent, eyes on the track. And all at once, I was "in the part."

I had been watching for him day after day. To-day, he was later than usual; only a moment or two, but every minute, every second, in view of the train that was so near due, added to the danger! But now, at last, at last, that figure I knew so well, was coming

straight toward me. I waved tentatively, trying to attract his attention. I moved nearer the edge of the trestle. Now, he had passed the center.

Suddenly, he looked up. My heart opened like a flower! I waved frantically. He waved back. I laughed aloud. Then, I almost swooned with horror! He had fallen! He was struggling to regain his feet, but something, I could not tell what, seemed to impede him! In some way, he seemed to be caught in the ties. He was lying flat on the rails, writhing. I clenched my fists. I cried out: "Wait! Wait! I'm coming, Ben!"

All at once, in the distance, I saw the smoke-plume of the oncoming locomotive beyond the woods and hills. I bent forward, my teeth clenched. I started over the trestle. Tie after tie, tie after tie! I had never realized how many there were. Nervously I began to count them. All the time I was looking down; seeing between them the river, far beneath. And nothing on either side of me. Further and further the river seemed to grow. And still I kept counting. For the fraction of a second I hesitated. I had lost count. Was it seventy-four, or eighty-four?

I had an insane feeling that accuracy in the matter of counting those endless ties was of the utmost importance! On and on I held; and on and on! Startlingly then, and much too near came the shriek of the engine. Mechanically, I went on more swiftly. For one daring second, I was able to take my eyes from the ties, and the river below. I was near him!

"Thank God!" I choked back a rising sob.

Again, I looked up.

"Ben!" I shouted.

"For Heaven's sake, hurry!" he growled.

I went faster; I was up beside him; I leaned over him. I did not dare look along the track for fear of seeing the engine, which once again released its fiendish shriek. I grasped hold of Ben. I partially lifted him. Somehow, he got his arm around my neck.

"This is the devil of a pickle!" he said ill-temperedly, as if it were my doing. "Now, don't let me forget that I'm lame!"

We began the return journey. It was frightfully difficult; twice as difficult as it had been making the trip alone. Naturally, he had to lean on me. I felt every moment that I was surely going to fall. And, every now

and then, I looked up to *see* if H—— was shouting to us to dive. In my certainty that I should never be able to hear him in the pounding clatter of the oncoming train, I quite forgot my fear of taking a false step.

The rails on the trestle began to hum. We heard the roar of the engine, growing louder and louder with each passing second. Suddenly, a full realization of what I was doing came over me. I realized that I was, in truth, in deadly peril; that at any moment, the great blackness and weight behind us, which seemed looming over our shoulders, would reach us and crush us down, mangled and battered beyond recognition! Ben was no longer simply leaning on me; I was bearing his whole weight. Frantically, I tugged at him. I was no longer Lizette trying to save her injured lover; I was simply myself, Nella Moreland, making every effort to reach safety. For the moment, all my romantic thoughts about dying a tragic death, and leaving behind me a reputation for daring bravery, had entirely vanished from my mind.

Still, I was thinking as much of the man beside me as of myself. Yes, in my romantic dreams, I had not counted on Ben. Even if I

had been indifferent to my own fate, what of him?

"Oh, come!" I cried. "Come! We'll make it yet!"

I looked up to see how far we were from the end of the trestle. There were a dozen or more ties to cover yet. And now the trestle itself began to shake under the tread of the oncoming locomotive. There was no doubt about it. It was right behind us, and coming on. I glanced up wildly. The camera-men and H——were standing there like figures of stone, not making a move, apparently not even seeing!

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Eight ties still to make. We took another, and another. The thing was dreadfully close. One, two, three more. Now, only three were left. I jerked hard at my burden; once, twice, three times. The whole world was roaring in my ears, and the landscape was spinning and dancing around me, like a world gone mad!

All at once, with a last terrific pull, over the rails we sprawled, tumbling down the dirt of the embankment, all in a heap. At that very moment the heavy train rolled by!

We lay a huddled and not very dignified spectacle at the bottom, bruised and torn, but very much alive. I looked at Ben, and burst into hysterical laughter.

"Hurt?"

He sat up and mopped his forehead.

"Whoo!" he breathed. "I wouldn't do that trick again for a million dollars! My! but you're a corker!"

And then H—— came scrambling down to us, followed by several others of the company. He shook hands with us silently. The tears were in his eyes.

"Well, well!" He could hardly speak. "Great! Marvelous! It will make the hit of the month! Miss Moreland, you can do it! You have it in you! But——" He, too, wiped his wet forehead. "Ye gods! Ye gods!"

Afterward, he said:

"I thought you were lost for a minute. I really thought so! You just made it by a hair's breadth! *My* hair stood on end, I assure you!"

I had no fears of the result of the "try-out" the following week. I was not ashamed, either, when I saw our picture. It got the highest vote of the evening and Nella

Moreland scored a huge victory. The manager, himself, came to congratulate me.

"You took some tall chances there," he said, pumping my hand up and down in a jerky, excited, nervous way. "I want to thank you personally. This picture is a sensation."

It was. He had not overstated it. It was even a breathless affair to watch it. But, deep in my heart, I took no credit to myself. I knew why I had been led to do so foolhardy a thing. And I knew that the courage of desperation, born of recklessness and a temporary distaste for life, is a very poor kind of courage, a very weak imitation of the real thing, the courage in the moment of happiness and calm.

I went up out of the testing-room, up into the Studio, and, quite inadvertently, ran right into a mix-up.

As I passed behind one of the scenes near the rear-end of the Studio, I heard the shrill voice of Laurie Lawson:

". . . don't, eh? That's all she is. I know it! I happen to know Roland Welles. And now it's H——. H—— and she! Thick as pea-soup!"

I turned abruptly, came from behind the scene, and confronted her and her audience. There she was, holding forth before several others.

I laughed.

"Oh, Miss Lawson!" I said.

They all turned, as if a bullet had brought them round. They were thoroughly frightened.

I laughed again.

"This is very kind of you!" I said. And, in the silence that followed, I turned and walked off.

But my recent triumph went stale. The feeling of exultation went out of my heart. In my dressing-room, I sank into a chair and wept bitterly.

The cruelty of it all! I understood the reason well enough. I knew that Laurie Lawson felt that I might eclipse her in the Studio, and finally do what I have actually done, take the ascendency over her. But to work against me in so sneaking and underhand a way! To first couple my name with that of Roland—and then with that of H——! They all knew now about Roland; they knew! I was desolated at the thought.

Just then, there came a knock on the door,

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and as quickly as I could I brushed away my tears.

"Come," I said.

H—— came in. He was smiling divinely. He looked down at me with eyes filled with kindness, and more than kindness. Suddenly his expression altered, as he bent forward to look at me more closely.

"You haven't been crying?" he asked in amazement.

I laughed softly.

"A little. It's nothing. I'm glad the picture was so good!"

"I see!" he murmured. He stood silent, struggling with himself. Then he leaned nearer.

"You are brave and fine," he said. "And I'm glad, glad for myself and for the others, that you have come to join us."

He took my hand. I saw a curious expression on his face, but he only turned quickly and went away.

I turned and looked at myself in the mirror before me. Was I beautiful, or not? Or was I ugly? Passionate face, with the black hair around you, *are* you beautiful or ugly? I leaned over closer to see my own image more distinctly.

"Nella," I whispered, "is he falling in love with you?"

And I recalled that Laurie had just coupled our names together. It seemed as if I could not bear it.

"Oh, poor, dear H——!" I murmured. "Don't fall in love with me! I've given all my love away to a scamp, a glorious scamp! There's none left for you or anyone!"

Star in the mirror, what else could I say to you to-night, if I said it?

One other thing I said:

"Roland is coming back to me. He must!"

August 1st.

Midsummer! Night comes as a relief. For all day the dazzling sun has beaten hotly through the immense glass roof, making of the Studio a brilliant oven. And when, over our heads, the five rows of arc-lights were turned on, we seemed to move and walk in flames. When you add to that that we were all in Colonial costume, with wigs, paint, powder, and heavy winter dresses—well, I can only describe the result by saying that our faces ran away!

Half the company is sick to-night. I think the only person who didn't complain is H——. He kept right on being gentle and handling us indulgently, in spite of his keen interest in the result of our combined efforts. I can only say, as always, dear H——.

Strange, that spent as I am, my face pale (it looks positively pallid and wilted, with my hair all matted to my forehead and cheeks), I should still want to sit here and write.

But it is all due to little Jane Bergera, who plays ingénue parts: she came up and kissed me before them all. And, as she did so, I

noticed that the perfume she was using was lilac!

The scent came swooning over me. Oh, the fresh lilacs that I crushed to my lips the night that I first met Roland Welles! I felt drowned in the rush of the past, that overwhelming flood of sweet and bitter memories. That love that mounted in my heart throughout that year until it culminated in that kiss beside the pool under the tree. And then the blank year that followed!

I am lovesick to-night. Why should I not confess it?—that aching longing that I have just to see him again: I ask for nothing more—just to see him! I lean back in my big, comfortable chair, and, closing my eyes, conjure up the well-remembered picture of his face. There is not a line or feature of it that I do not know, together with its every change of expression.

Did anyone ever have such a wonderful smile, I wonder? Ah, Annette, you who have felt its charm will find it in your heart to pity me, I am sure. For you, of all women, will be able to understand.

But side by side with the softer and more tender feeling, I am conscious of another surging impulse: a touch of the old reckless-

ness returns, the recklessness that brought me my first fame. For it seems to me that all through the first year I was here, and after, my broken heart acted as a spur to drive me to the wildest extremes. I was merciless to myself, and merciless to all who had the slightest interest in my welfare, merciless in my daring. And the whole Studio wondered at me. The "Little Panther" was on the warpath! H—— did all he could to protect me from the consequences of my own folly. I was soon aware how deeply and sincerely he loved me. And, slowly, through him I achieved a new faith in men, a new hope in life. For his love was of a kind I had never before seen in any man: the kind that I had dreamed of as a very young girl, but had come to believe was never to be found outside of a young girl's dream. My foster-mother's terrible revelations had crushed that belief almost utterly, and what she had not succeeded in doing, Roland Welles had completed for her!

But H——'s love was unselfishness itself. It was the love that never thinks of self, but renounces for the good of the loved one. It was the love that gives without asking any return. It was the love which, while always

at a white glow, never leaps into flame, never dies into ashes.

And his patience with me! He threw the arms of his spirit about me to protect and help me. What would I ever have done without him?

It sometimes seems to me now as if H—— represented, or at least called out, all that was good in me, while Roland appealed only to what was bad. The angel of light, the angel of darkness. And how the two influences struggled within me! And in this inner civil war I was constantly being torn. Ah, if I only really knew what I wanted! But the darkness is sweet, the darkness is sweet! H—— must have divined early in our friendship what was the trouble with me; for never once did he speak directly for himself. But how much he *did* do for me in a thousand different ways!

Without ever putting it into words, he made me see how crude I was as an actress. He turned my thoughts toward study and self-improvement. I am not ashamed to confess that by the gentlest hints, and the most casual suggestions, he taught me manners.

A movie actress, perhaps even more than an actress on the regular stage, because she

is called upon to play such an infinite variety of parts without much opportunity to study, must be able to assume the manners of all classes. She must be able to play the woman of good society, the queen, the shop-girl, the girl of the plains, the thief, the woman of the street, each in turn, as the case may be. And it was especially in "polite" parts that I failed for lack of experience and training.

But I was an apt pupil, apt indeed. And the fires of my ambition once lighted, I let no opportunity escape me for self-improvement. If for no other reason, I was grateful enough to wish to please H——. But besides, I soon found, as many another broken-hearted woman has done, that there is no anodyne like hard work.

Owing to the fact that in the beginning I had whole days of leisure when I was not needed for any of the pictures in process of making, at which time my presence at the Studio was not required, I began, for the first time in my life, to really read seriously, with an object in mind. I unhesitatingly confessed my ignorance of all that was really worth while in literature to H——. Doubtless my confession did not surprise him. But no one

could have helped me with greater kindness and tact.

Attacking my new problem with characteristic enthusiasm, not to say intemperance, I spent whole days seated in the reading-room of the Public Library, often remaining until the hour for closing. Fortunately, I never had more than two or three days at a time to myself. If I had had, I probably would have done my poor eyes some lasting injury.

But so observing a person as H—— could not fail to notice how pale and heavy-eyed I constantly was when I presented myself at the Studio on the morning when I was wanted. A little judicious questioning on his part brought out the fact that I was reading just as recklessly as I did everything else. After a talk with him, I resolved to continue my studies on lines more in accord with the dictates of good sense.

It was about this time that my old enthusiasm for the theater and acting revived. As I had many free evenings, and no longer had to guard every penny in my purse, I felt justified in frequenting the theaters again. Besides, was it not all in the line of my self-improving lessons?

My thoughts went back to the days when I

used to go with Mrs. Burkstadt. I would have given a good deal to have had her with me just for one evening. It was a long time since I had had any word from her, chiefly through my own fault. Her last letter had remained unanswered for months, owing to the fact that I was far too depressed to write. Then, too, it had been a matter of pride with me not to write until I had some good news to impart. Her letters also depressed me a little. Somehow I felt that she was not altogether happy. In some way her son seemed to have been a disappointment. Without exactly saying that he was unkind to her, she showed that he frequently wounded her by his carelessness.

With my mind awakened and alert, owing to the help that H—— had already given me by his many little hints and suggestions, I began to note, for the first time in my life, little, subtle, delicate things which hitherto had escaped me entirely. I realized how raw and crude all my efforts had been. With sincere humility, I acknowledged to myself that I would have to begin all over again, unlearning much that I had already learned, if ever I was going to make anything of an actress out of myself.

As a proof that this state of mind was genuine, I will add that I never once doubted that it could be done. I had too true a belief in my own gift to permit of thinking and feeling otherwise.

H—— and I used laughingly to allude to my constant round of theater-going as my "Night School." I can only hope that other scholars at their night schools are able to derive as much inspiration from their studies as I did from mine. All my work at the Studio—and I am not unmindful of H——'s many valuable hints, nor ungrateful for the constant help he was able to give me—all my hard reading could not have taught me the great lessons that I learned from watching the acting of real artists.

If I were asked to say which one of the actors I saw taught me the most, I would find it impossible to answer the question. From Grace George and John Drew I first learned how polite comedy should really be played. From Julia Marlowe I learned how Shakespeare should be read. Mrs. Fiske and Mansfield also taught me much. But the two artists who made me realize most completely what a tyro I really was were, strangely enough, two, no word of whose language was

I able to understand: namely, Sarah Bernhardt and the Italian actor, Novelli.

When I think how nearly I came to not seeing either of these great artists, I positively shudder! Again, I am indebted to H—— for not having missed this wonderful opportunity. Novelli was to me quite unknown. But who has not heard of Sarah Bernhardt? I felt an interest, perhaps it would be more accurate to say a curiosity, to see her, of course. But the thought that I would be so handicapped by my ignorance of the French tongue had kept me from going. I felt that, in the circumstances, she could teach me little, and I sternly resolved not to yield to the temptation to gratify what was, after all, more of curiosity to see the *woman,* than a desire to see the *artist.*

During luncheon hour, one of the days when I was busy at the Studio, H—— said to me:

"I suppose, now that the great Frenchwoman is here, you have entirely abandoned the native drama?"

"Oh, no," I said. "What's the use? I wouldn't understand a blessed word that she was saying."

He gave one of his queer smiles, which I had come to know masked a hidden meaning.

"Someone once said that Sarah Bernhardt would be able to act as long as she still had the use of her arms. I think I'd go to see her once, if I were you. I'm sure you'd not regret it."

"If you say so," I smiled back.

The very next evening found me in the front row of the dress circle.

It would be futile for me to try to tell you what impressions I carried home with me. To say that I was completely swept off my feet, is to put it mildly. I had a sense of complete bewilderment. I felt that I had never seen acting before. Her grace, her charm, her wonderful voice!—I had heard and read of them and of the magic of her personality. But nothing I had read had prepared me for the reality. I confess that it was only after I had seen her a number of times that I was able, in a sense, to judge of her as an actress; that is to say, I was so carried away by her wonderful art that I forgot to study how she made her points, produced her effects.

What would I not give to have seen her in the heyday of her youth and beauty! That thought often came to my mind. Still, I am not at all certain that the serious student can-

not learn more *now* from watching Mme. Bernhardt, in her old age, when her art is her greatest asset, than in the days when she had youth as well.

Novelli produced almost as great an effect upon my mind. He, too, was a great artist who understood his art from the ground up. I found them both at the same time an inspiration and a cause for discouragement. How could one hope, in the haste and bustle of the modern theater, ever to attain such mastery as theirs? The only answer I could find was: "Work, work, work," and "Study, study, study!"

Is it presumptuous in me to say that I hope some day, in the distant future perhaps, to be worthy to carry forward and continue the standard of art in the theater borne by such great artists? To this end I will work untiringly, never losing sight of my goal. How the way will open for me, when the opportunity will come, I know not as yet. The only important thing is that it shall find me ready when it does arrive. And come it will and must. If I did not sincerely believe that, I think I would give up and die!

Not that I intend to model my acting after anyone. Of course what one reads and sees

educates, stimulates, and fires the mind, and is thereby unconsciously assimilated into one's nature. But when it comes to the actual acting, I lose myself in the part and its naturalness, so that any modeling after another would produce a self-consciousness and lack of perspective which would shatter all illusion of the character and invite disaster. Besides, the exclusive imitator soon stunts his own growth. No, I always "create" for myself; only I am always seeking the better, and sometimes, newer way. So it is, in the years that I have been here, that, through endless work and constant hard study, I have changed from a raw, crude girl into a young woman of some power.

I wonder if this sounds conceited? I hope not. I made up my mind, when I began to write this, to be honest with myself and about myself, as far as was humanly possible. And I hope that self-knowledge is not necessarily egotism. How could I hold the position I do, if I did not have the sense of power?

Yes, hard work was the way, and lucky for me that it was. It consumed so much of my time and energy that I had little opportunity for brooding over the past. And yet, as I have told you, the very thing that drove me,

the motive-power, so to speak, was my broken heart. They say that neither Byron nor Heine would have been a great poet if first their hearts had not been broken. It was that secret terror and torture in my breast that whipped me into recklessness—and then made me famous over-night!

It came suddenly, before the year was up, late in the autumn. A company of us, in two automobiles, had been up in the country to take a scene around a club-house. Luckily for me, H—— was not directing; he would surely have restrained me. But "Big" Cantor was acting as director. Cantor, the most nonchalant, irresponsible, dare-devil man in the whole Studio!

In our automobile, as we were returning, were Cantor, the camera-man with his apparatus, and myself. There was a wild wind blowing; the sky was overcast with sudden shafts of sunlight and running shadows over the countryside. The air was chilly. We sat silent, huddled up. Cantor was pulling fiercely on his pipe. For some reason or other, I was feeling horribly forlorn, my eyes half shut, my teeth gritted together. I wanted to jump out of my skin! Life did not seem worth living just then. I was ready

for something wild and abandoned. It so happened that we had to pass through the city in a roundabout fashion. We were threading the tenement-house district. The car went fast. The horn was honking continually. Children scattered before us. The streets were dirty and crowded, and the faded red of the houses gave one a feeling of utter desolation. Of a sudden, turning a corner, the chauffeur stopped the car. Right before us was a wild and thrilling fire scene. Vast crowds stood just back of the fire-lines. In front of the burning building, mattresses and furniture, hurled from the windows, lay heaped on the dirty pavement. The engines were throbbing, the gutter was criss-crossed with hose, and the rubber-hatted firemen were coming and going, gleamingly wet. The fourth tenement from where we had come to a stop, was on fire, smoke and flames jutting from its windows. It was a thrilling thing to see. One forgot the horror of it, lost to everything but its pictorial aspect. Every window in the block, all the roofs, the full length of the street outside the fire-lines, were thick with people, the greater part of them with faces filled with anxiety. There was an air of suspense, peril, deadliness.

Here, in the very heart of the city, one of the greatest forces of nature was working havoc.

Evidently Cantor saw it only as I did. But he was infinitely more practical. It was too good a chance to be missed. He must get the scene, and save it for some future picture that should have a fire in it. He stood up on the seat in his excitement. He spoke sharply to the chauffeur.

"Honk your horn like hell, and then drive close up to the lines!"

The chauffeur obeyed without question or comment. We jolted forward, scattering the crowd. We pushed slowly on until we were stopped by a policeman. But Cantor was equal to the occasion. He leaped down and whispered into the ear of the representative of the law: "Moving pictures!" Oh, magic words! The officer was interested at once, and proceeded to move off, and get himself into the picture.

The camera-man set up his machine. The crowd threatened to overwhelm us, but the officer kept them back. Then, suddenly, looking up, I thought I saw a little face—a child's face—through the smoke that belched from one of the top-floor windows.

Every drop of blood seemed to leave my body and rush back to my heart. I sank back on the seat, half-fainting. But even at that moment, a wonderful thought came to me. I leaned over to speak to Cantor.

"I'm going to rush in—save a child, or something! We'll build this up into a great picture later."

He grinned. His face lighted up with an expression of boyish glee.

"I get you. Gee! You're *it*, girl!"

It was a mad, reckless, insane thing to think of doing. Even in the excitement of the moment, I realized that. I realize it even more now, looking back at it!

I never had any illusion that I was about to do something heroic. Even if I had seen rightly, and there was a child there, the thing for me to have done would have been to point him out to one of the firemen. No doubt, at a word from me, he would have plunged at once through the flames to the rescue. That was his business. His training and experience, to say nothing of his man's strength as opposed to my weakness, made him the proper person to go. By going myself, I not only was putting my own life in jeopardy, but that of the child as well. I do not mean to say that I

thought of all this at the time, but I have thought of it often since.

There were but two conscious emotions uppermost in my mind. I experienced at once the real horror, the appalling tension, of feeling that a living child was up there, cut off, terror-stricken, probably sobbing for its mother, and the exciting sense that I was about to risk my life for the sake of pulling out a marvelous picture.

I slipped down to the pavement. I turned, in that curious rage I always feel when I am at white heat.

"Don't say a word!" I snapped to Cantor.

Then I was off. I pushed people aside, two or three layers, it must have been. I looked neither to the right nor to the left. I feared that the policeman or some one of the firemen would stop me. I simply ran for it. I can recall jumping over lines of hose, and slipping twice on a wet stone. But I never slackened my speed.

I heard a great shout rising behind me, a tremendous din. At last I reached the doorway. I climbed half a dozen steps. I was in the dark hall. I could just make out the dim figures of the firemen moving about. I

rushed past them, gained the spiraling stairs, and fled up them.

By this time I had hypnotized myself into the same state of mind I am always in when I "lose" myself in a part. Will you think it dreadful of me when I tell you that I was playing the scene where Gismonda thinks that her child is lost? I had seen Bernhardt do it several times. By the time I had reached the first landing *the child was mine!*

Here, for the first time, I became conscious of the smoke. It made me cough a little, but not sufficiently to make me think of abandoning my purpose. I took the second flight of stairs with the same speed. On the third landing, a fireman stopped me. I turned on him in a fury, and smote him with my fist in the face.

"My child!" I cried.

He staggered, cursing, and I went by him and flying up. Then I plunged into overwhelming smoke, and had to slacken my steps to find the banister. But I started on again almost immediately, running. On the next landing, the heat was almost overpowering. Now, I had to crawl on my hands and knees, on and on, and ever up. I began to feel faint and dizzy. I was choking and coughing and

blinded. The heat was terrific. I felt as if I were in flames myself. All around me, I heard a crackling, and a great roaring sound which someone afterwards told me must have been made by the back-draught. But through it all, I crawled on. I pushed through a doorway. I saw a dim light through all the smoke, the light from the window.

I crawled over the floor toward that life-giving light, which meant air to fill my choked lungs, if I could only reach it. By this time I was nearly exhausted. For the moment I had forgotten all about the picture, forgotten even about the child I had come to save. All my conscious thought was concentrated upon gaining that window.

At last, after what seemed to be an eternity of time, I reached it, and drew myself up at the sill. I leaned out, and took in a long breath of that blessed air! I must have been only just in time. I am sure I should have fainted in another minute. I took deep breaths, and looked around the room.

Near the middle of the room something was lying on the floor. It was hard at first to distinguish what it was through the smoke. But the revivifying air had quickened my senses. I saw that it was a little girl lying on the

floor unconscious. I rushed over to her. I picked her up. I decided to run for it. She seemed heavy in my arms, but clutching her close, I rushed out of the doorway. The smoke rolled in upon me. I was driven back. I realized that to try to get out that way was folly.

Then I turned and went back to the window. I set the inanimate little body across the sill and leaned out, shouting at the top of my voice. But even at that moment, actress that I am, I remembered the picture! I leaned out further, as far as I dared, hoping that the camera-man was panoraming the picture, and would get me.

The firemen were already screwing the fixed ladder of the hook-and-ladder car up toward me. Two men were already on it. It towered in the air, coming slowly up and over to my window. And the vast crowd all turned their eyes my way. They had eyes for nothing but me. To me they seemed nothing but a great wave of whiteness; the most wonderful audience I had ever had, or will have!

Well, that was about the end. I handed out the child first; then insisted upon climbing down alone. As I came slowly down and reached the street, a mighty shout went up, a

deafening, resounding roar of human applause and approval. It was with an effort that I kept myself from acknowledging their approval with a bow, such is the force of habit. And then, the reporters surrounded me.

Cantor said later: "We got every bit of it. Now it's up to you to write a story round it. You see, we'll put one over on them all!"

But H——, dear H——, shook his head when he heard of it. He intimated that courage, real courage, was a great thing; but that possibly acting was quite another.

The next morning the papers were all full of it.

MOVIE ACTRESS SAVES
CHILD AT FIRE

MISS NELLA MORELAND RUSHES INTO
BURNING BUILDING AND RISKS
LIFE FOR LITTLE
CHILD

And the Camera-Man Winds Gayly
And Gets It All

That was one of the headlines. It was my first taste of fame. I had really made myself.

It all seems unreal now, looking back over it. But it was real enough then! And yet, even then, a little unreal, perhaps. I acted like an automaton. I shot myself through that building and that smoke in a most inhuman way. I certainly did not deserve any credit for it. It was not I, it was my despair and my instinct as an actress that did it.

Well, so it goes! And the night is getting hotter and hotter, and the hour later and later. I think I am even too tired to think about Roland, and the scent of crushed fresh lilacs! Good-night! Good-night, Annette! And as for you, poor old girl in the mirror, go and sleep!

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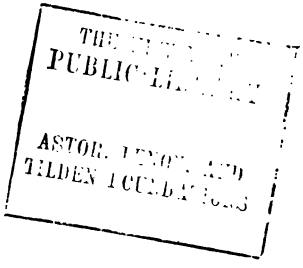
KATHLYN WILLIAMS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August 5th.

A fine evening for writing! The breeze coming through the window is full of the advancing rain. The leaves are rustling outside, and the dust is blowing. But what a relief after the heat wave! H—— left some roses for me—again. They are fresh and dewy, and smell exquisitely. But I must go on, if I am ever to finish.

Fame! What *is* fame? It is to have reporters interview you, and motion-picture "fans" write you letters from all parts of the world, and to have articles about you in the magazines, and to be asked to write columns of "Beauty Hints" for an evening newspaper, and to have your picture on the cover of the *Dramatic Mirror!* It also means that you are sure to have many people in the studio jealous of you. It is also to have wonders expected of you every day—for one must never take a step back! It is also to be given a lovely dressing-room—the very one I have now.

I have been lucky in two things: one, that I was reckless and broke through; the other that I had H—— to work for. Otherwise my way up might have been much more difficult.

I am sorry to have to admit that the usual way is through favoritism, through love. There are few truly great men in the picture business, few like H——, for example. And men who are not great resent, because they do not understand, intellect, power, and unlimited capacity for work.

Girls who are their recognized inferiors commend themselves more to such men's vanity. Such girls they can use as they like, the other kind they can only work *with*. Even a girl of towering courage, talent, physical endurance for work, and high ambitions, must present a colossal resistance to the petty jealousies and stings of others; she must be equipped, one might say, with an automatic inspiration pump, and a shock-absorber of unlimited power.

And the higher you go, the steadier and more level-headed you must be against unpleasant people. Hoodlums never throw stones at unripe fruit; it is always the perfect fruit that attracts their attention.

Yes, Annette, even if you are as lucky as I, you see how hard it is. And if you are not so lucky? What then? Do you understand now?

One of the most delightful and welcome

results of my sudden leap into popularity and prominence was the letters I received. Dear fans! If you knew sometimes what it meant to open the mail in the morning; to open the mail when one is feeling blue and downcast, and read those words of spontaneous praise and affection. It is an inspiration in itself.

Curious to think how my personality, wrapped up in those little films, is sent all over the world, and suddenly is seen and shines, as it were, and sends its little message—the very things I, myself, felt and suffered, enjoyed, and hoped—into the hearts of millions of all sorts of people! That alone should be sufficient to keep me at my work; to make me determine to give *all* of myself, my best, my deepest love, my purest thoughts, to you, and you, and you—my unknown, distant friends!

If I could only forget myself. If I could only pull this barbed arrow of rejected love out of my heart! Shame on me for my weakness. I that would seem to have every reason in the world for being the happiest of human beings! Those letters! Those letters! Ha, I must laugh even now, all coiled up! Hames of Rochester! Hames of Rochester!

Now, Hames was an honest and sincere young man. But how dreadfully young he was! He had a position in a bank. I don't quite know what; I don't recall that he ever told me that either in any of his letters or in the one memorable interview I had with him.

But Hames fell in love with Nella Moreland. And not knowing what an imperfect creature she was, he went to see every film that showed her. And, being quite out of his head, wrote the most wonderful, mad love-letters to his star. She read every one of them, and laughed until the tears came! Not that Nella was hard-hearted; but those letters were nothing short of excruciating.

"If I could die for you," he wrote, "I would die in raptures." And again: "Somehow I can't think of you doing ordinary things like eating and drinking!" And yet again: "You are so pure, so virginal, my Star, my Queen, my Dawn!"

Well, Nella wrote him to be sensible, and copied out her ordinary bill-of-fare to show what a creature of Earth she was. But it did no good. And at last she wrote: "I smoke cigarettes and sometimes quaff champagne." And *that* did no good either!

One day Nella was in her beautiful home—for she had a beautiful home by this time. It was a little apartment, and the living-room had a lot of curios in it. (Let me hasten to say that I got all my ideas from my artist friend, the one who had given me the first lift in introducing me to H——, Mr. Morey.)

Nella was studying her French lesson. The bell rang. The maid came in.

"Gentleman to see you, ma'am. Won't give his name."

"Light or dark?" asked Nella, her heart beating violently, thinking, of course, of but one person in the world, *the* one!

"Light," said the maid. (And hope died again!) "And he's young, and he's got the trembles."

Nella wanted amusement. Wasn't she cruel? Besides, for the moment, perhaps, she had a feeling that she wanted to avenge her own disappointment on someone! So she said:

"Show him in."

And in he walked, or rather tottered. Poor boy! He was perfectly panic-stricken. But it must be confessed that he was handsome. He was tall, and blue-eyed, and awkward, and

deliciously young; and in his hand he held a big bunch of lovely flowers. But he was so overwhelmed that he almost slipped on the rug, and stood staring and blinking at Nella.

Nella rose from the couch on which she had been reclining.

"You wished to see me?" she asked rather unnecessarily, as if he could have come with any other purpose.

There was a moment when he positively choked with embarrassment. Finally, he sufficiently mastered his emotion to fairly shout: "Yes!"

His voice cracked. "I'm Hames, George Hames, of Rochester," he added.

Nella saw a great light, and her heart missed a beat. All the way from Rochester! So this was the lovelorn Hames. She studied him a long moment before she asked him to sit down. Poor fellow! He virtually collapsed into a chair, "And the sweat stood on his temples with the earnestness of speech"! Nella seated herself on a chair facing him—but not too near.

He handed her the bunch of flowers. She thanked him with her most gracious air. Then they had a little talk.

Nella tried to put him at his ease. She asked him what sort of place Rochester was, where he worked, and whether his parents were living, and how many brothers and sisters he had, etc., etc.,—a brilliant and sprightly conversation, wasn't it? But what was she to do?

Gradually Hames, of Rochester, came to life. He grew almost bold. Ah, he knew, he knew, that faint heart never won fair lady. He plunged with all the madness and speed of youth!

"Miss Moreland," he said, still in that curious cracked voice, "you remember what I wrote you? It's true, every word of it. I gave up my job to come to you. I just couldn't bear it any longer."

He seized her hand. She looked away, and I'm afraid she smiled, just a tiny smile. And yet he was such a dear child!

"I hope," he said, "I hope that I shall win your love and that you will marry me!"

Nella turned sharply to him.

"You came here to propose marriage to me?"

He flushed scarlet and blinked.

"Oh!" he said; "when you grow to love me, when you get to know me better——"

Then Nella rose. He followed her example, and stood looking at her with a faintly puzzled expression. Oh, how much older she felt than he! So, she put her two hands on his broad shoulders, and spoke to him just as his mother might have done.

"My dear boy," she said, "you've offered me the very best and biggest thing a man can offer to a woman. And I'd be a most miserable creature if I were not both proud and flattered. But—go back home to Rochester. Get your job back. And then wait until you find a woman worthy of you. I am not that woman. You don't know me, or anything about me. You'd be very unhappy with me. Hush! Not another word, Mr. Hames. You'll live to thank me some day for being so frank and candid with you."

He was both amazed and abashed. He felt, doubtless, like a small boy that had been caught in the act. He swallowed hard, and tried to choke back the tears.

"If that—if that is what you want me to do," he said brokenly.

Suddenly, he straightened up, threw back his big shoulders, and with his handsome head held high, he looked her full in the face for the first time.

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"I'll do as you say," he said—and there was a positive ring in his voice, it was no longer cracked with fright and embarrassment—"not because I believe for a moment what you say about not being worthy of me. There isn't anyone else in the world that I would *let* say such a thing. If a man were to say it, I'd—I'd punch his head!" (And he looked as if he would welcome the opportunity!) "I don't even like to hear *you* say it. But I'm going to do it because I see now what a fool I have been to ever dream that you could even think of a fellow like me. I must have been loony to think of such a thing! You, who must have thousands of people in love with you! You, so beautiful and famous, with the whole world at your feet! You, who have only to choose!" (Ah, Hames of Rochester, Hames of Rochester, what would you have said if you had known that the one being in the world to whom the wretched woman before you had given her love, had tossed the gift aside, so little did he value it!) "I sure was plumb crazy, cracked, to think of such a thing! Why, I'm nothing and nobody! I can only beg you to forget all about me.

"But besides remembering your wonderful

kindness and patience—for if you'd shown me the door, it would have been no more than I deserved for my presumption—there is one thing I can still do. Every time one of the pictures you are in comes to Rochester, I can go and see it. And I can sit there and look and look at you, like all the rest do, and feel proud to remember that I once actually talked with the most beautiful and loveliest and sweetest woman in God's world, the only woman I shall ever love!"

His voice was eloquent with sincerity and earnestness. Nella never doubted that he believed every word that he said. The tears were in her own eyes now, and she was not ashamed to have Hames of Rochester see them, either. With a sudden impulse, she stepped close to him and kissed him on the forehead.

"You're a dear boy! Now, go! Good-by!"

He gave her a last wonderful look, a look in which gratitude and despair were mingled. Then, he went. Nella heard the door close behind him. Then, she laughed and wept at the same time.

Fame! Such is fame! Then one becomes honey, and the bees are drawn—and also the

flies! And one came, greater than all the rest. But I will not write more of it to-night. I have been smiling. I do not want to sigh. I am going to stay happy to-night!

August 12th.

I wrote: "One came, greater than all the rest." Greater—ah, yes, and baser. He came. Roland came.

And I was still longing for him to come. And I was still waiting to hear those well-known footsteps. Still watching for a sight of that well-built form, and that handsome face. He, the chivalric, the noble, the idol; he that I had glorified in the white fire of an innocent love!

And my heart was still his. I knew that he was a scamp, that he was utterly unworthy. But what of that? Since I knew that I still loved him, and if he came back to me, I could not say "No" to him. I knew that I could not. The whole tide of my being set toward him.

I was sitting in a corner of the Studio, in one of the sets, waiting for H——. There was a window in the set, a window-seat, and next to it a bookcase. I was sitting on the window-seat, trying to read. But now and then I looked up sadly at the empty spaces of the Studio. No work was being done at the time. It was during one of those lulls in the early afternoon when no one is about, and

even the carpenters are silent. And then, suddenly, in the silence, there came footsteps, familiar footsteps. And my heart whispered to me who was coming!

My whole being caught fire. My arms stiffened. My fists clenched. A glory seemed approaching, rushing over me, drowning me. It was as it had always been, ever since I had first seen him! It was my dream come true! It was the same thrill as came to me that afternoon in autumn when we kissed beside the still pool, under the great tree, with the leaves falling all about us.

He came nearer and nearer. Then he was standing over me, just as he had so often done in my dreams. Those dreams where he stood over me, and I rose, and his arms bound me, and I stroked his cheek, and we kissed.

"Well, Nella," he said softly in that well-remembered voice.

The air was filled with golden points. The world seemed to be rising in steam under my feet. My heart was beating madly.

Then I gave him a glancing shaft of a look, which took in nothing but a burst of goldness.

"Well, Nella," he repeated, and his voice was velvet.

"Yes," I murmured, trying to control myself, trying vainly to hang on to that self that was being swept out on a great and glorious wave.

"Isn't it about time that we made up our little quarrel?" he asked.

Without waiting for an answer, he went over to a small table that stood near and laid his hat and stick on it. In another moment he was sitting beside me.

I could hardly breathe. I was sure that he could hear the beating of my heart.

"Why did you come here?" I asked in a breathy tone.

He looked at me reproachfully.

"Why? You know why. Why did you run away? I've been waiting to hear from you. How could you have brought yourself to listen to that silly talk of Miss Audrey! It wasn't like you, Nella! You don't know how you hurt me! I felt that I could never go to you again. You can't realize what a hard struggle I've had to bring myself to this. But since I have so far humbled myself, can't you meet me half-way? Can't you forgive and forget?"

Was there ever a man who knew so well how to make love? That velvety purr of the

voice! That ingratiating charm of manner! That humility and utter self-abasement!

I was carried along by him. I tried my best to resist. I kept telling myself: "You will regret yielding now all your life. Be firm. Stand by your decision. Your eyes have been opened once for all. Do not be beguiled into forgetting the lesson that it has cost so much to learn. You know what he is."

"But what she said was true," I managed to say.

"True—in a sense. I confess that until I met you I was a different person; a rather bad sort, I'm afraid. But since then—you, Nella, you have changed everything in me."

I felt the force of his argument. Perhaps, after all, he was telling the truth. He may have really loved me. And that love may have worked a change in him. How could I question it, when my heart cried out: "Believe!"?

"But it *was* true," I urged. "And that's all you thought of me!"

"Nella, do you remember that afternoon on the cliffs? You did not doubt me then," he whispered.

I shut my eyes that he should not see the rush of happy tears. If he had taken my hands then, I should have been lost! (Yet

should I say "lost"? I ask myself. Is it not what I am dreaming of even now? That he should come back to me and beg my forgiveness and the renewed gift of my love?)

But in that moment's pause, a terrible thought came to me that fairly seared my heart, and sent back the warm tide of my reawakened love. It suddenly flashed into my brain that he had been content to do without me so long as I was unknown. That he had waited until I was famous before coming. Well he knew how great a prize I was for a moving-picture director! Now, I could make him, as well as bring money into his pockets!

And I recalled all that I had ever heard about him. And I remembered that he had made love this way to so many others. And the moment of true insight that I had had when I left him, came back to me.

I felt both humiliated and ashamed. And the shame was not all for myself. Suddenly, the panther within me awoke. I fairly turned upon him.

"Mr. Welles," I burst out, "I realize perfectly *why* you have come. I'm famous now! Will you please go?"

The colossal conceit of the man! Even

then he did not dream that any girl could hold out against him.

"Nella," he cried, "have you forgotten our great love?"

I experienced a complete revulsion of feeling. How dared he speak of "our great love" in so casual a way! To him it was only a catch-phrase by which he hoped to get what he wanted!

"This talk of love," I said sharply, "comes very easily to your lips, Mr. Welles. I don't think you know the true meaning of the word; I don't think you know what love is. I can only repeat my request: please go!"

He leaned toward me, protesting.

"Ah, but think of our love!"

I rose. Once more, I turned on him.

"If you don't leave me at once, I must return to my dressing-room."

I don't know what I should have done next if H—— had not come in at that moment. Never had he been more welcome!

"What is it?" he asked, alarm in his tone, as he took in my perturbed face.

"This—man," I said, "this man here——"

H—— stood beside me, as if ready to defend me. He folded his arms over his chest.

"I think you had better leave here at once," he said quietly. But there was a quality in his voice that was unmistakable.

Roland rose languidly.

"Very well," he said with well-assumed carelessness. "But I shall see you again, Nella; and soon."

With that, he went. I turned to H——. He seized my outstretched hands.

"Nella!" he cried.

"Oh!" I burst out; "my heart! my heart!"

And flinging away, I sought my dressing-room, and sank in a chair, sobbing.

Why had I sent him away? Why had he obeyed me? Why had H—— come at that very moment?

"Roland!" I sobbed; "come back!"

But that night, that sleepless night, I made up my mind to do something more reckless and daring than I had yet done; something so mad that I should be killed in the doing of it, and so end it all!

August 18th.

I did not have long to wait; my chance came soon afterward.

It was in "The Aëro Diver," easily the most sensational of all the sensational pictures we had ever turned out. I, myself, wrote the scenario. And H—— only undertook it after he was perfectly convinced that if he did not himself direct the film, then Cantor would. As I have already said, Cantor was admittedly the dare-devil of the Studio. He had justly earned the reputation of stopping at nothing.

So, H—— said:

"If you must do it, I intend to stand by, and keep you from killing yourself."

The story, I must confess, was a tawdry one, far from convincing. But it was one of those melodramatic affairs that have one big moment in them which so stuns the audience that they forget everything but the thrill. Everything in the play, every minor situation is so constructed as to lead up to the big moment. Consistency and everything else is sacrificed to the climax. In short, it is one of those plays with the much-desired "punch."

It was not the first time that I had tried my hand at writing scenarios; indeed H—— had warmly praised more than one of the ones I had shown him, which I had done at odd moments. But as I was never quite satisfied with any of them myself, I had refused to allow any of them to be tried. But, just now, I was reckless in more ways than one. I did not care what anyone thought of my effort, just so long as it provided me with a part in which I would have an opportunity to do some daring and dangerous thing.

This, then, was the story: Joyce, the heroine, is a young girl who has lived all her life by the sea. She is as much at home in the water as a South Sea Island native. She has a lover who is an aëronaut, with whom she has already taken several flights.

One day they take a longer flight than ever before. They go way up in the clouds in his plane. In descending, they land, quite by chance, in a lonely little fishing village. No one is left but the women and children. The men are all out with the fleet.

The day is scorchingly hot. But they have their bathing suits with them. (Of course there is no reason on earth why they *should*

have them, but remember that this is melodrama, and in melodrama, as in fairy stories, everything is possible.)

One of the fishermen's wives permits them to use her cottage for changing their clothes. In a few moments, they are racing each other across the beach to take a cooling plunge in the sea.

The beach is deserted. The fishing-fleet is far away. One can just make it out, like a number of gray specks clustered together in the distance, way down by the horizon. Only one boat, a small rowboat, is left, drawn half-way up on the beach. A child, playing alone on the sand, climbs into the boat, rushing back and forth, giving orders to the crew with which his quick imagination has peopled his craft.

The tide has turned. Slowly and stealthily it rises. The boat is floated out. Further and further it goes to the delight of the child, too young to comprehend its danger.

By this time the two swimmers have come ashore, and are making their way slowly back to the fisherman's cottage. The child's mother, coming to the doorway, sees the boat, with its precious load, already far from the shore, headed for the open sea. Screaming,

she rushes across the sands toward her oncoming guests. It takes Joyce and her lover only a moment to take in the situation. That small dot to which the distracted woman is pointing is a boat in which the happy-faced child they had passed on their way to the water, is alone and helpless. The breeze seems almost to bring to their ears his feeble cry for help. But what can be done to save him? No boat of any description is left.

Then Joyce has a splendid idea! She and the aëronaut will go up in the plane, skim as low as possible over the child, and Joyce will dive, swim to the boat, and row it ashore. (It goes without saying that she will find the oars lying in it; remember, we are watching melodrama!)

I confess, Annette, that I am ashamed of such a bare-faced story. But you see it has that element so desired by the American theatrical manager—"punch!"

"Are you sure you can do it?" was the first question H—— asked, after reading my effort.

"I can't do it *all*," I said, pretending to be cross. "I can't, for example, run the aëroplane yet. But I can do *my* part."

"Where did you ever learn to be such an

expert swimmer and diver?" he asked curiously.

"I could swim a little ever since I can remember," I told him. But I didn't explain that I had taken swimming lessons, just as I had taken dancing lessons and fencing lessons. In fact, there is nothing that I have not taken lessons in, once I thought it might help me to advance in my chosen profession.

We took the big situation first, of course; the scene of the saving of the child. Two cameras had to be used. One, on the shore, to give the big view of it; the other from the launch, out near the drifting rowboat, to get the big feature of the dive and the actual scene of the life-saving. H—— was to go out in the launch, too. He wanted to be near me when I dived.

The day was a perfect one. H—— had engaged a man named Manton, a professional aëronaut, for the part of my lover. He was both young and good-looking. But he confided to me, soon after we had arrived on the scene, that he hoped there were no "love scenes" in which he had to play a part. He had only recently been married, and he felt sure that his wife would object. He was good enough to assure me that if it were not for

that circumstance, he would only be too willing to impersonate my lover. I thanked him gravely, and assured him that I perfectly understood his position!

There was some delay in starting. Our own little juvenile had been indisposed for several days, necessitating the hiring of a substitute, a fact which we all regretted. Little Harry was one of the most popular members of our company. He regarded the whole business as the finest game imaginable, and was always ready for anything.

Somewhere, H—— had obtained the services of a stolid, stupid-looking child, who was, of course, accompanied by his mother, a woman of more than mature years. The whole story had been explained to her, and she understood perfectly what the child was to be called upon to do. But once on the ground, she declared that she would never permit her darling to venture out in a boat alone. Of course, she must go with him. This was absurd, as she very well knew. Besides there was absolutely no risk involved. The boat was to be closely followed by the launch in which there were several men besides H——, all of whom could swim.

For a moment I feared that the whole thing

would have to be postponed. Getting another child at the last moment would cause a tiresome delay if not a postponement. I could have wept with vexation. I was all "keyed up" for my foolhardy exploit. No one knew better than I that such moods were transitory.

But H——, who knew human nature in its many variants, soon fathomed the real cause of this sudden and unforeseen solicitude on the part of the child's guardian. I saw his face grow hard and stern. In a few moments everything was arranged, every fear allayed —and all by adding a yellow-backed bill to the sum which had been paid in advance for the child's services.

I experienced a complete revulsion of feeling. A few seconds before I had had a sort of sympathy for the woman. Although I felt that her fears were entirely groundless, I told myself that a nervous person might easily invest the situation with imaginary terrors. Now, in a reaction of disgust at her sordidness, I crossed over to where H—— was standing, and begged him to call the whole thing off for the time. But he pointed out to me that in complying with her demands—which practically amounted to blackmail—he

was saving money for the company. To bring the whole company out again would have put us to even a greater expense.

So at last all was ready. Manton, I may have forgotten to mention, had run his plane up behind some bushes on the shore, and he and I, in our bathing suits, stood ready on the sand below it, down near the water's edge.

The rowboat having been fastened securely to the launch, our own juvenile's understudy was put in it, and having been instructed to lean over the edge and wail, "Mamma! Mamma!" at the proper time, the launch shot out to sea. H—— stood at the stern to give me a last wave of encouragement. Not that I needed it. The old "panther feeling" was stirring me again. If I had been conscious of any danger, it would only have been to exult in it.

Manton and I watched as they receded further and further from the shore. I do not know what his thoughts were; but the only feeling I was conscious of was that it was taking them an immense deal of time to maneuver to let the rowboat go, so that it would drift to the exact spot we had agreed upon. Then they stood off.

The camera-man on the shore started to

work; and Manton and I, running into the water, plunged into the icy tide. We shouted together in real enjoyment, while we swam about gleefully. He, too, was a good, strong swimmer. It was as much of a lark for him as it was for me. I can only say that I was never more calm and self-possessed in my life.

At a signal from the camera-man, Mrs. Harris—a dear soul, who always mothered all of us both on and off the stage—all dressed up as the fisherman's wife, rushed down the sand, screaming and gesticulating hysterically. She pointed out over the sun-glancing sea, whose brightness fairly dazzled us, and shrieked:

"It's my boy! My darling Harry! Drifting! Drifting! Save him! Save him!"

We stopped splashing each other, playing about like children, to follow the direction of her pointing hand. All at once, we saw and understood. We rushed from the surf on to the beach. Gone was all the light-hearted gayety of a moment ago! Horror had us in its grip!

Save the child we must. But how? We rushed frantically up and down. No, there was no boat, no smallest craft of which we

could avail ourselves. We looked at each other in despair. What could we do? What could anyone do?

I do not know whether Manton had ever acted before. But whether he had or not he certainly "played up" to me, as well as any professional could have done. Possibly because it was not a love scene, nothing of which the most exacting and jealous wife could have disapproved, he felt free to let himself go. I shall always believe that if he had not chosen aviation, there would have been the making of a good actor in him! But one can't do everything in the span of one short life.

Suddenly, I had an inspiration. I flashed a look at my lover. He grasped the idea at once. We dashed for the bushes behind which our machine was lying. Manton sprang into his seat. I lost not a second in getting in behind him. The engine throbbed under us. The whole world smelled of gasoline. I was conscious of an intense heat.

And then, on the instant, the great winged bird that held us in its heart rose on its mighty wings and soared into the sky.

The sensation was wonderful; never shall I forget it! My whole soul rose with it. I

felt a sense of exaltation, a sort of freedom of the spirit, as if I were no longer trammeled with a body. All trouble, all sorrow, all pain, all grief, every form of suffering that I had ever known or imagined was being left behind. I was through with the earth and all its miseries. I was free!

Manton told me later on, that, above the rush of the wind, above the roar of the engine, he could distinguish my voice, intoning a sort of wordless chant which still had a certain form and rhythm. I have no doubt that he told the truth; but I, myself, was absolutely unconscious of making a sound. I only felt that strange feeling of elation, that half-formed hope that I might go sailing on and up, on and up for ever and ever, never to revisit the earth again. If something had told me that Roland—changed, purified, ennobled—was waiting for me on the earth below, I would not have wished to return. No, I had finished with earthly things, even with love. Ah, if it could have been so!

The next sensation that I can recall was one of wonder and delight at the indescribably beautiful panorama that unrolled itself beneath our feet. I have since heard it said that the novice in flying can rarely bring himself

to look below him. This certainly was untrue in my case. I gazed with delight at the sparkling, rolling sea spread beneath my feet, at the far horizons, and at the clouds now so near. Up, up we soared. The breeze fairly blinded me with its sting. Still on and up we went. Suddenly we dipped.

"Ready!" shouted Manton.

"Ready?" I screamed in reply, not in the least understanding what he meant. I had actually forgotten what this wonderful flight meant, forgotten what I was there for, forgotten that there were such things as pictures in the world!

But the spectacle of the little boat below me, and of the launch in the offing with H—— standing with strained, upturned gaze, recalled me to myself, and to my duties. But it all came too suddenly. I got up slowly and reluctantly. I grasped the poles on either side of me, and half stood, bending low. Under me I got a second glimpse of the nearing rowboat, and the child in it. I was not afraid. I love high-diving.

"Jump!" cried Manton.

Bending lower, measuring my distance from the boat, which once more seemed to be far beneath, calculating just how I was to

land on one side of it so as not to strike my head against it, I put my hands together over my head, and let go.

Then, I shall never know just how, something dreadful happened. My foot caught in some way; for what seemed to be an eternity of time,—in reality, of course, it could not have been longer than a few seconds,—I could not free myself. I heard Manton's loud cry of alarm. It sounded like the blare of a trumpet in my ears. With a last violent wrench, I succeeded in freeing my prisoned foot.

But, naturally, the effort threw me completely off my balance. I did not dive in a straight line like an arrow, as I had intended doing. I realized that I had lost all control over my body, as I went hurtling through the air, actually turning somersaults in my awful flight.

But one thought was clear; one thrilling thought: "This is the end! I am going to my death now!"

Then a mighty something rose up all round me. There was a fierce impact of pain—and that was all.

When I at length opened my eyes, I did not know what had happened, or where I was. I

was in motion, a queer up and down motion, slow and strange. Then gradually, I comprehended what was happening. I was in H——'s arms. And he was carrying me up on the beach.

"I am getting you all wet," I said; a brilliantly original remark! But it had the merit of being an exact statement.

"Oh!" he breathed bitterly; "Nella! Nella!"

I managed to look up in his face. And for the first time in my life, I really saw him. I saw that splendid face, with its combination of strength and gentleness. I saw those blue eyes, wonderful in depth, and in their capacity to express love. The stone that had so long done me for a heart seemed to melt in my breast, with the flow of healing tears that began to run down my cheeks. H—— laid me down on the sand with infinite gentleness.

"Are you badly hurt?" His voice broke on the words.

"I'm not hurt a bit," I declared stoutly. "Just stunned a little. How did you get me?"

"Oh, we got you at once. You landed on your back. But everything's all right now,

since you are not hurt. You're telling me the truth, Nella?"

"Of course!" I lied bravely. As a matter of fact, my back was giving me excruciating pain.

Our eyes met. He was bending low over me. And peace, so long a stranger to it, entered my heart, and all the accustomed feeling of recklessness left me.

"Promise me," he whispered, "promise me that you will never try such a thing again."

"Tell me first," I demanded, "is the picture spoiled?"

"Not so badly damaged that it cannot be fixed. To-morrow you can swim out there and get the child. It will be just so much more thrilling in the end. It will show your bad fall. But you can appear to right yourself, and swim on. But promise me."

"Yes," I said, "I promise you. You know best."

It was a complete surrender, sweet because it was so complete. It was the dawning of a great, new, and real happiness in my life.

But only the dawning. And a beautiful dawn does not always mean a clear day!

Ah, Annette, why did you ever cross my path?

The end is not yet. Why, I ask again, why, dear H——, can I not love you as completely as you love me?

But let me go back to say that it was nearly a week before my poor strained back would permit of the finishing of that picture which might have cost me my life. Eventually it was finished along the lines suggested by H——. And it was one of the most successful I have ever been connected with.

But for nearly a week, I kept to my bed. H—— came to inquire for me every day. And he never came without leaving a huge box of the choicest flowers behind him.

September 3rd.

H—— just poked his head in at the doorway.

"Whoo!" he said; "may I ask if you are writing a tragedy?"

"No—yes. Why?"

"Because you look like Lady Macbeth in the sleep-walking scene. But, seriously, what is it? A diary?"

"Sort of."

"Then just jot in it: 'H—— looked in and wished me well.' "

There it is, dear H——. If ever you come to read this, you will see that I have obeyed you. I know you "wish me well." I know that I have *one* true friend in this world. And, ah, how I need a friend!

I had one of my blue spells again yesterday. Not so blue, possibly, as the ones I used to have, but bad enough. First, I thought of spending the evening in writing. But what is there to write? Am I going to go on with this to the end of my days?

Instead, I went downtown to a big photoplay theater on Broadway. The place was crowded to the top. One of my pictures was being shown. It was one of a series of his-

torical pictures which I worked up myself, during lonely Sunday afternoons and evenings in a dusty, musty branch of the Public Library. And it gratifies me to think that these pictures have given me a new and different standing with the public.

In them I hope I have been able to show some of the larger possibilities, both for the producer and the actor in motion-picture work. The European producers have done things along the same line for a long time. But there has been all too little of it, up to now, in this country. And I must say that I do not believe that the fault has lain wholly with the American producers. But I am not going to enlarge on that subject just now.

To return to my pictures: the particular one which was being shown last night was called "Mary, Queen of Scots." It was made up of the most picturesque and—if I may coin a word—picturable incidents in the life of that unhappy and unfortunate queen, beginning with her, a care-free, light-hearted girl at the court of France, when the world must have seemed an enchanted place to one of her pleasure-craving nature. The all too brief days of her happy first marriage were shown in a series of really lovely scenes.

Then came the tragic one of the death of the poor little boy-king. And that reminds me; H—— persists in poking fun at me because I am determined to do Catherine de Medicis one of these days. The reading I have done has convinced me that she could be made a sympathetic figure. I would not present her as that sinister and masterful woman who stalks across the pages of history, stained with crime. But even so, her crimes were more political than personal, and she lived in a bloody age, and fought with the same weapons which her enemies used. But I would show her as a woman who for long years was made to suffer both in her love and in her pride.

But to return to Mary Stuart. The most striking, perhaps, of all the pictures was the one showing her departure from Calais for Scotland. It was a perfect triumph for H——. The last word in moving-picture art. I feel sure that he felt repaid for all the labor and trouble he had put on it. For, it is needless to add that H—— backed me to the limit in my most extravagant and ambitious schemes. Without his sympathy and support, I could have accomplished nothing.

The rest of the series were purposely made

less elaborate, and touched upon the chief events in the Queen's stormy life, concluding with the final picture of her being led to execution.

You may imagine how hard we both worked. I pored over every volume that I could lay my hands on that could aid me in gaining a knowledge of the period. But I never begrudged a moment thus spent. Aside from the pleasure and pride I took in the result, there was the comfort of knowing that in fitting myself to play the part of the ill-fated Scottish queen, I was adding a little at least to my small store of knowledge.

But with all my study and research, I was a little humiliated to discover that there was nothing I could tell H—— that he did not already know. His mind is a perfect storehouse. And what is downright exasperating, he never seems to forget the smallest thing he reads! No wonder that he is considered by all who know anything of the business, the most scholarly as well as resourceful producer in the country. And in "Mary, Queen of Scots," he more than outdid himself. And when I told him of the lavish praise I had heard and read on all sides, he only smiled and said:

"We'll show them that we still have a few tricks up our sleeves when we come to do the next."

And I am confident that he will keep his word. For I place no limit to the possibilities of pictures. In the first place, the intimacy and accuracy of the camera, which catches the faintest change of expression of the face, and later registers it, greatly magnified on the screen, will eventually demand a new type of actor; one who will be able to express the most delicate shades of emotion and thought, not only with his face, but with his body, and by his lightest gesture. A type that, having mastered the almost lost art of pantomime, will be able to convey more subtle changes than would be possible by the speaking voice alone. The stage will be stripped of everything but the drama of poetry and discussion; of plays following the lines of Shakespeare and Ibsen. When that day arrives, what marvels we shall see!

Already the movies show certain advantages over the older stage. The actors are able, in the very nature of things, to live a more normal life, even—shall I say?—a more moral life. For the great thing from the

point of view of the welfare of the actor, is that it permits of living in one place; of making a real home, and choosing your own friends, thus building up a little social life—a thing which some of the best of the older actors seldom knew.

One is not thrown back on the loneliness of "life on the road," where one is often compelled to choose between a close companionship with unpleasant and uncongenial companions, or utter solitude. A most charming and elderly woman once told me, speaking of the "horrors of the road," that many and many a time when stopping at some wretched second-class hotel, she would spend the days in her room, ringing often as many as half a dozen times for ice-water, which she would pour down the basin as soon as it was brought to her. But every few hours she just *had* to speak to someone, even if that "someone" were only a "bell-hop."

Another thing: one works in the daytime, and often out of doors. One's business associates are seen in the blessed light of day, without the glamour of theater-dark, orchestra-music, and fever-lanterns. Then, too, the stage-door "Johnnies" are done away with. It would be a courageous one, indeed, that

would dare wait outside the door of a moving-picture studio! And there is always the greater health and sanity of the outdoor work to be weighed in the balance.

Then, the outlet for one's creative ability is one of the chief charms of the work. My ideas fairly clamor for expression. My resources sometimes seem to be inexhaustible. Besides, playing a new rôle each week keeps one's mind continually on the *qui vive.* I don't know just why it is so different from doing the same thing in "stock"; but it is. Somehow, we never seem to be hurried. There are so many departments, all managed by capable people. Everything seems to move on wheels, as the phrase goes. One has only one's own work to consider or worry over. Ah, now I have it! Organization is the secret. There is hardly a stock company in the world —certainly none in this country—that possesses such an organization.

I am not judging solely from my own experience. I perfectly realize that my apprenticeship with Beaver-Face was no criterion for forming so sweeping a judgment. But I have talked to actors and actresses who have "graduated" to the movies after long and varied experiences with first-class stock com-

panies. And they all bear witness to the fact that the work is not nearly so hard, and that there is no comparison in the results obtained.

Not that there is not enough work to keep one fully occupied, what with learning the part, studying the period, and planning the costumes—if it be a "costume play," particularly. For with us, they must always be both correct and accurate. When I think of some of the makeshifts we were forced, through ignorance and necessity, to employ at the Henry Irving Theater, I could both laugh and cry. It was both pathetic and ridiculous!

There is another thing that the future will bring. Indeed, already there is a change. A higher class of actors will become interested in our work. For a long time, the legitimate actors regarded the movies with the same sort of contemptuous toleration with which, years ago, they used to look at vaudeville.

Driven by necessity, they would condescend to "take a fly at it" occasionally.

But anyone can remember the hue and cry that was raised in the theatrical world when the great Bernhardt made her plunge. Now

no one thinks anything of it. And so it will be with the movies. As I say, the change is already beginning. I will never forget my rage and indignation when I first heard us spoken of as "Screen Lice!"

But when I began, there were few people in the work who were at all interesting to know. Even now, most of them fall into the habit of just "playing to the screen," and get to be like playing-cards—all face and no back! I deplore this lack of mental life in our players of to-day!

In fact, our players are, as a rule, divided into two classes: one, the middle-aged whose ambition is burned out, who, more or less, have been induced to follow this *new branch of their calling,* lured by the thought of the regular salary, and the prospect of being able to live with some show of comfort and regularity. They bring to their new work their long experience and their habit of obedience. But they take no real interest in it, and they quickly fall into a rut.

The second class is made up largely of the young and inexperienced actor. He is usually a hare-brained young person, out for a lark; if not, he is a self-satisfied "pusher," lacking all the qualities which go to make

up the true artist. No amount of training will ever equip him to take first rank among artists worthy of the name.

Ah, if only they could realize how much could be given, and with what rich returns! If they could only learn the lesson that they could not reap without sowing, and could not sow without reaping! I, that give all, that give myself in everything I do, have reaped wonderful returns!

For example, when, as I told you, I went down to that large photo-play theater and saw one of my own pictures run off, I was feeling very blue. But, as the picture ended, and I looked around me at that packed audience, none of whom had the least suspicion that the woman whose pictured face they had been watching with absorbed interest, and the woman sitting quietly among them, were one and the same, I felt that my life had not been altogether thrown away. Some of them were crying, touched by the sorrows of that most unhappy of queens, whose fatal gift, whether it was beauty, or charm, or whatnot, seems to have made her the target for every arrow of outrageous fortune. And at the end of each picture, I could hear that sound which is almost dearer to the actor's heart than ap-

plause; that inhalation of the breath which betokens an absorbing interest.

"Pull yourself together, Nella," I whispered to myself, "forget the sorrow that consumes you. After all, your petty little troubles are of no importance in the great scheme of things. But since you can help others, if by only giving them an hour's pleasure and enjoyment by taking their minds off *their* troubles, that *is* worth while!"

And it is. If I could only free myself of the constant ache in my heart, that ache which gnaws like a rat gnawing at a beam! And how ungrateful I am, when one thinks of all I have to be thankful for.

Yes, H—— was right. I fear I am writing a tragedy. But he was wrong to say that it might be like Lady Macbeth. She was great and terrible; but she was not sad, and I am sometimes sad to the verge of madness! Four whole months have gone by since I began writing this. And what have I gained?

Yes, it is four months and more since I first met you, Annette. Met you at the dawn of my great new happiness. That happiness which you, all unconsciously, destroyed, bringing back to me, as you did, the sting and ache, the forlorn feeling of forsakenness that

belongs to the past which I had hoped was buried forever. And during all these months, I have been struggling to put it all clearly on paper for you to see, perhaps. And, perhaps, by so doing, I have hoped to cleanse myself, as it were, "of that perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart"!

For, from the day that I made that reckless dive, and gave H—— my promise never to attempt anything so foolish again, I have been wonderfully at peace with myself. I had the feeling of having awakened from some nightmare. A feeling that in that final, terrible moment when I realized that death was near, I had come to myself. H—— had made life possible, even livable again. I could not honestly say that I loved him, in the same sense that I had once known love. But it was sweet to feel that he loved me: preciously sweet to have him for a friend; to feel him near me; to tell him my little troubles. And it was sweet to receive his ready encouragement in all my work. For now we always worked together. All his own ideas and plans he confided to me.

But most of all, I was grateful to him for never speaking of his love. He knew that *I* knew that he loved me. He was content to

wait until the time should come when I would be ready to hear him. He respected my reticence. He was too unselfish to push his own claims. Indeed, he is more sensitive to the quick fluctuations of a woman's heart and mind than any man I have ever known. He seems, by a sure intuition, to understand what is going on in me, and he adapts himself to my changing moods.

I remember how particularly happy I was with him in Washington last spring. Washington was a perfect garden city at that season, with its beautiful avenues of trees, and the starry scattering of parks, all trembling with delicate new green, and the gay beds of tulips, and the air vibrant with the songs of birds.

We tore around the city happily in a perfect fleet of automobiles, as is our custom, pausing only to take pictures here and there in some historic or important spot.

And then came that memorable Wednesday, when we took the scene for our new play, on the steps of the Capitol. It was one of those plays which have a popular story. They do not interest me as much as they once did. For I have been spoiled by better things. However, I always go through

them conscientiously. It is all in the day's work. And I pride myself on being a good workman. Besides, if H—— is directing, I have no higher ambition than to please him, and to make any picture he is interested in a success. I should be an ingrate if I felt otherwise, after all he has done for me. For I never forget that it was he who gave me my real first chance. He has made me. Where would I be if it had not been for him!

The scene itself was simple. Faber, one of our new leading men, was coming down the steps with me, very majestically. For he was an Ambassador from one of the greatest countries in the world, and I was an important Senator's daughter. At the foot of the long flight of steps we met my American lover, who suspected that the great Ambassador was plotting against our country. But I scorned my faithful American lover. The Ambassador sneered, and we passed haughtily on.

That finished that scene. I went back, half-way up the steps, to where H—— was standing. We smiled at each other, as we often did now, a quiet, comprehending smile.

"Nella," he said, "you look superb to-day.

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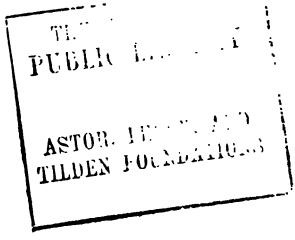
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There is something unusually radiant about you!"

"Is there, old one?" I laughed.

It was then that you came along, Annette Wilkins. You smiled brightly, and climbed up to H—— and greeted him almost affectionately, as a daughter might greet a father. He was visibly delighted to see you. He turned to me, keeping your hand in his.

"Nella," he said, "here is one of the loveliest and sweetest youngsters in all Washington."

I looked at you with interest. You looked so fresh and sweet in your smart little suit, that my heart instantly warmed to you. And when H—— said, "Annette, this is Nella Moreland," I saw your young face light up. And I knew that you were one of my adorers. And I was glad to feel that, somehow, you looked up to me; that, with the generous impulse that belongs only to the first springtime of life, you had made of poor me a sort of ideal. Am I mistaken? I think not.

I took your pretty little hand in mine, and I loved you on the spot. And you interested me, too. I felt that you had, like me, a strong personality. I suspected that you had great natural gifts which were as yet lying fallow,

waiting to be developed. But I divined a great natural sweetness of character as well. A sweetness which I have never had.

"Yes," H—— went on, "this is the daughter of one of my best and oldest friends. Heavens, I am forgetting that you do not know her name! Let me introduce you properly. Miss Moreland, let me present Miss Annette Wilkins. But come, let's get out of this, now that we have a little time to ourselves, and take a walk in this glorious weather!"

Then we went walking down the street, we three. H—— on one side of me, you on the other. And ever and again, I caught a glimpse of your face turned toward me with that adoring look! I did not stop to think how little I deserved it. I loved it!

When we came to the door of my hotel, you said good-by to me. Your eyes were shining with happiness. You said that you would never forget having met me. You even added that you would dream of it.

Little did I dream, for my part, that only a short time later I should set myself down to tell you the story of my life and my unhappy love, I who have never made a confidant of any living soul.

I am telling you all this, so that you may know how deeply I was affected by our meeting, *even before I knew.* And after the first pang of the knowledge had passed, I recalled your adoring glance. When one is conscious that some innocent young heart has made a sort of ideal of one, it brings forth whatever latent nobility there may be in one's nature. I was swept by the feeling that I must show myself worthy. That I must be nobler and bigger than even you thought me. And remember that I, too, had been drawn to you; you, so lovely and fresh and sweet. And then there was the allure of your personality.

It was more than a week later, back in New York, that H—— first spoke of you again. He came into my dressing-room, a puzzled and troubled look on his face.

"Nella," he said, "do you remember meeting a girl called Annette Wilkins in Washington?

"Do I remember? Of course I do," I answered warmly.

"Well," he went on, a smile breaking through the trouble in his face, "she wants to go into the movies, and I was wondering whether or not we could make a place for her

up here. I am sure she has talent, or gives promise of having talent."

"I'm sure of it!" I said positively. "There's something most striking and unusual about her, which shows that she's a real person. Certainly bring her here to us. Why not?"

He hesitated. Again the troubled look overclouded his expressive face. How well I have grown to interpret its every change!

"Here's the difficulty," he said finally. "It's that fellow in the studio where you were working before you came to us."

I felt the blood leave my face. I looked at him sharply, but he was gazing intently down into the street below.

"The man in the studio where I was working before I came to you?" I repeated. "Not——"

"Yes," he said quickly, still without looking at me. I knew that it was as hard for him as it was for me. "I mean Welles, Roland Welles," he went on after a time.

My hands clenched in my lap, under the dressing-table.

"Tell me all about it. What do you mean?" I demanded breathlessly.

He shook his head in troubled perplexity.

"She's met him somewhere, and she's in love with him. And he has promised, of course, to take her in *his* studio; and make her, and marry her. But everybody knows him! That's why I wanted to have her come here. To get her away from him, if possible, before it is too late."

I was amazed at what happened to me. All my hard-fought-for self-control forsook me in my time of need. I shook with one of my old furies. I "saw red," as the phrase goes. In that dreadful moment, I never even gave a thought to the friend whom I was wounding afresh. Thinking only of my own reopened wound, I was unmindful of his. His months of devotion were as nothing. I managed to keep the rage out of my voice; but it was cold and hard.

"Take her on up here? And have *him*—have that man coming up *here* continually to see her! I will not agree to it! At least," I added, overcome by a belated sense of shame, "let me think it over."

H—— gave me one of his keenest looks.

"Very well, Nella," he said quietly, even gently. "You will have plenty of time to think it over. Annette is going away on a trip for a few months. We can both think it

over. We need not decide before fall. But please remember that her father is an old and valued friend. I ask you to consider me that far."

With that, he was gone.

But it was as if the peace that had come to me was a false peace. It was like the deceiving green growing over the edge of the crater of a volcano.

Leaving a hurried note for H—— that I had one of my old headaches and would not be able to work that day, I left the Studio, and drove home.

Once there, I sent my servant away for the day, giving her permission to go to a sister's and spend the night. I wanted to be alone. I wanted to be where no human eye could see me. I wanted to give myself up completely to the rage and jealousy—yes, jealousy, Annette; jealousy of you—that was consuming me. I had never known Katie, my maid, to be so slow. I thought she would never be ready to go! I thought she would never stop coming in to tell me where I would find the tea, and in what part of the icebox she had put the cream, and where I would find the eggs for my breakfast, and the grapefruit, etc., etc. I had told her that she need

not come back until after breakfast the following morning, and that I was going out to dinner.

I knew that she was only thinking of me and of my comfort. But I hated her for not going more quickly. At last I heard the door close behind her. I was alone.

I was in the big studio in my apartment. I took a studio-apartment, because I love to have a room in which I can move about freely. One gets accustomed to space, working in our huge studios. After them, the ordinary New York flat seems like a band-box! My studio has just enough furniture in it to make it look inhabited. A grand piano at one end, a large table for books and magazines, a few chairs, and a couch. Here and there, on shelves, on brackets, and on the window-sills, are beautiful and costly pieces of bric-à-brac, many of which H—— has given me.

When at last the welcome sound of the closing door fell upon my ears, I snatched off the little velvet toque I was wearing. The next second it was spinning through the air. I had not meant to throw it at anything; I only wanted to have my burning temples free. I wanted to let down my long hair. But it

struck a delicate, fairy-like vase—one of the first pieces that H—— had ever brought me. Down it came with a crash, shattered into a thousand pieces. After that, I think I went crazy! The sound of the breaking glass gave me an insane delight. At the end of a few minutes I had swept every choice piece that I possessed on to the floor.

Then the reaction came. A flood of shame, of remorse, of as bitter humiliation as I have ever known, swept over me. I threw myself on the floor in a passion of self-abasement. I was nothing more than an ignorant savage! All my hard-worked-for education, all my acquired refinement was a mere veneer! I had reverted to type! The years had done nothing for me! At bottom, I was the same ignorant, undisciplined child that had played long ago on the slag heaps in Pittsburgh! There was where I belonged! I had better return!

When I got myself up from the hard floor, sore and bruised in mind and body, night had fallen. I tottered into my bedroom, bathed my swollen face, and fastened my long hair up into a loose coil. Remembering that I had had nothing to eat all day, I made myself a cup of tea, and forced myself to swallow it. Then I took a hot bath, got myself into a

loose gown, and sat down to think things over soberly and sanely.

The past, that I thought dead, was not dead. That was clear. Roland Welles had become real to me again. But I was no longer filled with jealousy, with rage, with desire.

How could I have acted as I had done, when you—who were innocent in the matter—had made an ideal of me? And when I cared for you truly? But could I let you go blindly to him? That was the question which I set myself to solve.

And that was how I came to write this. That was how I came to tell you my secret; that you might know the truth, and choose for yourself. So I tried—and finally succeeded—to think of you, to feel toward you, as if you were my younger sister, or even my child.

But the struggle is not entirely over. It is wearing me out. I wonder if I will ever conquer it? You see now, dear, sweet, little Annette, how, unknowing and innocent, in crossing my path, you brought back the tragedy of my life in all its poignant freshness.

And, even now, when there seems little more to write, I have not quite made up my mind whether you shall ever see this or not.

I do not feel sure that I am big enough, and true enough, and brave enough to save you, although I can do it so easily!

For I love him! I love him still!

Ah, I am sick once more of life—and love!

September 16th.

A strange thought has been occupying my mind to-day. The idea came to me in the night, while I was lying awake. It is that some subtle change has taken place in me since I started to write this, my life-story. A strange change! Is it that all confession cleanses? Even if one is confessing, as it were, only to one's self?

For remember, Annette, I do not know yet whether I shall ever have the courage to send this to you, after all. In the end, I may simply keep it for myself; a record of the stormy pages of my youth, to be read over and perhaps, who knows, smiled at, when I get to be an old, old woman. It is hard for me to think of myself as really old in the sense of ever arriving at the stage when I shall not feel and suffer keenly. I am not at all sure that I want to. For when one cannot suffer, one cannot enjoy. At least it seems reasonable to argue so. And I have such a capacity for enjoyment that I cannot believe that it can ever burn itself out in this world at least!

There have been times when this civil war within me has threatened to kill me. For I was keeping it bottled up. I have had no

confidant. But this very setting it down on paper has seemed—or is it only an illusion?—to have relieved me. What—oh, wonderful thought!—if it is beginning to set me free? Free from heartache, free from pain and longing, free from the consuming desire to see him again, to feel his arms about me, his kisses on my lips, as I felt them that autumn day such ages ago! That has grown to seem to me the most desirable thing of all.

Everything I have written has come hard. It has been wrenched from me. It has been like a surgical operation. It has been like the throes of childbirth. But now that almost all has been told, the reaction has come. I am beginning to feel as if I were waking up out of a dreadful sleep; as if I were looking about me, and seeing again that the world is beautiful beyond thought.

September 18th.

Last night we had the great Motion-Picture Ball. All during the week there has been a public exhibition, and the Ball was the climax. And all through the week, too, the thousands of people that came and went, were handed little ballots to enable them to vote in the Popularity Contest. They were to vote for whatever candidate they chose; for the one they considered the most popular moving-picture actress in America.

Is it strange that I should look in the glass in amazement, and say to myself, like the old lady in the nursery rhyme:

"If this be I,
As sure I think it be——"

For *I* won the contest!

Was it five, or was it six years ago that I sat in the dark little Imperial Theater in A—— and gazed up at Roland Welles while he delivered his speech, my hands clasped, my whole soul looking out of my eyes? And last night voted famous!

But it is as I said at the start: there is no film I have ever acted in so dramatic, so strange, so unbelievable as my own life. To

come in a mere few years from obscurity and crude girlhood, into the glare and flame of the world!

And it was through you, Roland Welles, that it all came about. I can never forget that, although there is little credit accruing to you. I do not flatter you in making the statement. If you had been the man my girlish imagination painted you, the man I dreamed you were, I know in my heart that I would never have risen. I would have had no thought of glory for myself. I would have been content always to have lived in the shadow of your greatness.

The road up in Art is through heartache and sorrow. The way to its Paradise is through Inferno and Purgatory. And often it is our enemies who prove in the end to be our best friends; and the things that torture us and shatter us, those that make us in the end.

How strange it all is! How can we arbitrarily set down what is good and what is bad, when out of seeming evil so much that is good can spring?

But that Ball! H—— was delighted over it; proud as a peacock of me. He always knew it, he said. And he felt sure that I was yet

only at the beginning. Greater days beckoned. May this be true!

Well, they decided, of course, to make my entry at the ball a dramatic one. I must confess that I was not at all averse to this; what woman, and that woman an actress, would have been? No, after a time, the instinct to act becomes too deeply ingrained in us for us to be able to resist such temptations! So they decided to wait until half past ten, and then fling aside the curtains at the back of the little stage that formed one end of the ballroom, and have me suddenly appear, come down, and lead the grand march.

I designed my own costume. And I decided to make it as daring as was possible, consistent with decency. If I were truly the Queen of the Movies, and not the Little Panther any more, I must come as a Queen, and in a queenly dress. My maid, who is very clever and deft, and is not without ideas of her own, worked with me several hours to put on the final touches which often mean so much. And when I finally saw myself in the huge mirror that fills one wall of my dressing-room, I was so delighted with the result that I let H—— come in. He had come to escort me to the scene of my coming triumph in his

motor-car. He was absolutely thunderstruck when I swept him a magnificent courtesy.

"I'd hardly know you," he said. "Queen Nella!"

And then, suddenly, he came nearer to me. His lips parted, and a happy light came into his face.

"Turquoise!" he said.

I smiled at him. The turquoise is his favorite stone. He doesn't happen to have the foolish superstition that it is unlucky.

"Yes," I answered. "It is out of compliment to you. *You* made me Queen Nella!"

He took my hand and pressed it to his lips, and there was something that touched me deeply in the action. My own eyes filled.

Then I took a last look at myself, as it was time that we were going. My costume was, if I *do* say it myself, quite unique, quite Egyptian. There were Egyptian earrings in my ears, and I had a headgear of beaten brass with uncut turquoise dotting it. A string of them were across my bare shoulders, and helped keep my gown in place, and dangling from it, hoops of beaten brass inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

The fabric itself was cloth-of-gold drapery from the waist down, and the bodice was made

of pale orange chiffon, embroidered in gold. And I wore golden sandals studded with turquoise. Last of all—and a most striking touch it was—I carried a bunch of peacock feathers in my arms.

"You will make a sensation!" said H——.

His prediction was more than verified. I had a long wait in a little dim anteroom, surrounded by closed desks and uncomfortable oak furniture. Now and again, a door would open somewhere, and I would hear a gust of music from the ballroom, and the great hum of voices. There was something stimulating and thrilling in the sound. But I never felt more calm and composed in my life.

Finally, there came a lull. H—— came hurriedly in, more excited than ever. I do not think I have ever seen him so upset.

"The Queen is called for!" he cried.

I arose and laughed.

"I'm afraid I'll wind myself up in this. Won't you hold my train?"

He took hold of the end of it, very gingerly, as if he were afraid of hurting it in some way, and we marched forward through a door to the rear of the stage, and paused in the darkness, where the curtains overlaid one another. In front of us, through the thick

hangings, we could hear the mighty hum of the crowded human hive.

Then, suddenly, the band struck up, the curtains were drawn aside, and I stepped forward into the dazzling lighted space. I moved to the very edge of the stage and bowed.

There was a perfect uproar. An immense wave of applause, of shouting and the sound of stamping feet rose to my ears. Again I bowed, and looked out over that brilliant sea of faces, that vast throng of men and women. I was told afterwards that there were more than five thousand people present.

The applause continued in strange, recurrent waves. It would rise to great heights, then slowly die down; then begin all over again. I put up my hand to stop it. It was of no use. I kissed my hand to them. The noise only grew louder. I smiled. I frowned. Nothing made the least difference. The leader of the band saw my trouble, and at once signaled his men to play a lively dance tune. But the only effect was to add to the din.

"Nella! Nella! Nella Moreland!" they began to shout, and soon that was all that could be heard.

I confess I was childish enough to be thoroughly delighted; vain enough to feel that I

could stand there listening to them forever; moved enough to feel the tears crowding in my eyes.

I put up my hand again to stop it. Finally, a tall gentleman, the President of the Association, came up and took his place beside me, and put up *his* hand, as if he were about to make a speech.

At once, a remarkable silence fell on that great crowd. It was as if the excited air had changed into a vacuum, empty and throbbing.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "you have voted Miss Moreland the Queen of the Movies. In token of which the Association presents her with this gold medal."

And he came and pinned it on me.

"Nella!" they shouted once again.

My heart overflowed. I, too, made as if to speak. And once more there was that intense, unthinkable silence. So still was it that I did not have to lift my voice.

"Friends," I said, "for you *are* friends, I can only say that Nella's heart is in her mouth to-night, so that she cannot speak!"

This brought down the house. And I had meant every word of it.

Then the band started up a march, and the President took my hand, and two little pages

sprang up from nowhere to carry my train, and we went down on to the floor. The grand march formed, and I led it.

When it was over, there was such a rush to shake hands with me, that—foolish as it sounds—eight policemen were needed to save me from being mobbed.

There! I have written it all down as candidly and naïvely as a child! But you will understand, Annette, that I feel humble too, in a way. I do not feel that I deserve it. I am not as egotistical as I sound. Really, not! But it is good to set it all down on paper, at least; certainly better than running around telling it to people.

But that was not all. Later, with my train pinned up, I danced. The dance over, while my partner and I were walking slowly over to our seats, I passed Roland Welles. He gave me a keen look. But I lifted my chin high—like a very silly creature, I fear—and passed on without a sign of recognition.

He could not strike at my happiness at that moment. But I have been wondering ever since whether it was that I was so intoxicated with the ovation that I had just received, or whether it was that there really had been a change in me. I wonder.

"I shall put it to the test," I told myself.

It so happened that I met two of the girls of Roland's company; girls who had been there at the same time that I was. They both came up to me with every mark of eagerness —most unlike the old days when I was despised, after I had made my great failure in "Stepping-Stones." They simply lavished flattery upon me! I turned the conversation to their own work.

"And what sort of pictures are you doing now?" I asked.

They told me all about it. They were doing a wonderful picture of river pirates. And, on the following Tuesday, if the weather were fair, they would all be up at the north end of Manhattan Island, along the Hudson, taking the big scene.

Next Tuesday! I would remember that! *We* have a picture with a water-scene in it. To be sure, we had planned to take it down at the ocean. But I knew that I could persuade H—— to take it on the Hudson instead. Then, by seeming accident, I can meet *him*— and see for myself!

It is a risk. Oh, it is a great risk! Perhaps I won't do it, after all. Still, it is better

to *know* once for all, than to continue to live in this uncertainty.

Enough for to-night, Annette. I am thinking of you, as much as of myself. But I have a scheme.

September 20th.

I met Roland to-day. As we say in melodrama: "The deed is done!"

It has been a sparkling September day; blue and vigorous, with all the world shining brightly. It seemed good just to be alive, and breathe this invigorating air. I came to the Studio very early for me. It was hardly nine o'clock. I was humming a little song, and humming softly to myself, I ran up the iron steps to H——'s room. He was, of course, already at work, buried in his papers.

"Oh, Monsieur le Directeur!" I called in. "May the humblest of your servants enter?"

He turned brightly, smiling at me.

"Whatever the Queen commands!"

I came in and sat down beside the desk.

"But you *are* in a sparkling mood this sparkling day!" he laughed.

We looked at each other in silence. My heart went out to him.

"You've been awfully good to me," I said under my breath.

He smiled a little sadly.

"I couldn't help it—if I *have* been."

I felt a queer pang in my heart. I hastened to change the current of his thoughts.

"You must grant me a special favor to-day!"

"Granted in advance."

"But you don't even know what it is!"

"It's something you want, isn't it?"

"Yes; I want you to take the picture along the Hudson, in place of going down to the seaside."

"Oh, that? But why?"

"Because I want it," I pouted.

He smiled curiously.

"Granted, as I have already said. But you're very mysterious."

I rose. I went as far as the door, then turned back a second.

"Up to mischief, master!"

And away I went.

But all my feeling of gayety faded as the morning advanced. I began to chide myself for taking such a needless risk. And, somehow, it all seemed so unfair to H——. And yet I had no thought of being really disloyal to him! The barometer of my mind changed to "cloudy and unsettled." I was more than troubled.

We took the automobile through the city to the little wharves along the upper end. All about us were tiny boat-houses, with launches

and motor-boats, and little sailboats. The waters were sparkling and blue. The Palisades, in the distance, stood sharp and green-fringed over their rusty cliffs. Those same cliffs where Roland and I had had our brief dream of love on that day of autumn! I stood gazing out over the waters. And the tides of memory surged up into my heart, and darkened it!

Then, searching the scene about me I looked to see some sign of the rival motion-picture company. But there was nothing to be seen. I was both relieved and disappointed. I tried to put to one side all thought but of the work in hand. We set to. It took us less than an hour. Then H—— and I stepped out of the little motor-boat on to the wharf. We were about ready to go back to the Studio. But still I lingered, searching for some excuse.

"Put those things in your valise, please," I said to H——.

I gave him the wallet and package of papers I had been carrying in the scene. He sat down on one of the little posts that bordered the wharf, and opened his valise to put them in.

At that moment an automobile drew up at the end of the wharf, and Roland leaped out.

Looking about, he saw us. He came forward with his well-remembered swinging stride. His manner was as nonchalant as ever. He called to us:

"Hello! Why, Nella!"

H—— merely looked up. But I? I held out my hand. A curious little laughter had awakened in my heart. For, looking at Roland, I could honestly ask myself how I had ever imagined that I really cared for him!

"I'm glad to see you," I said quietly, without any trace of emotion in my voice or manner. "Are you taking a picture here, too?"

He was completely nonplused by my indifferent and yet friendly manner.

"Why, yes," he replied. "And you?"

But even while he was asking the question, my mind was busily at work. The eyes I had once thought so beautiful were cold and hard, and underneath, the puffiness of dissipation. The mouth was cruel and sensual. Where were the address and bearing, the grace and charm that had so completely won my girlish heart? The scales of illusion dropped from my eyes. I saw a commonplace, vain, and ignoble man. I saw him *as he is!*

"We have just finished taking ours. Strange that we should have selected the

same place and the same time. You know Mr. H——, don't you?"

That was wicked, and Roland winced. He nodded curtly.

"I thought you must have met," I went on. "Mr. H——, surely you remember Mr. Welles?"

I caught H——'s eye. His look of perplexity was giving way to one of comprehension.

"I remember him very well," he said shortly. "The last time we had the pleasure of meeting was up in our Studio."

"How charming!" I went on. "But Mr. Welles doesn't seem to recall the circumstances."

Roland's expression could only be described as "ugly."

"Well, good-by, Mr. Welles. You perhaps recall the line: 'All is not as it seems'? Think it over! I'm ready now, Mr. H——, if you are."

I took H——'s arm, and we sauntered off together.

In the automobile, H—— studied me a long time in silence.

"Well," he burst out at last, "you're a wonder! You did that on purpose!"

"I did," I confessed. "Was I cruel?"

"Not enough! He needs something sharper than you gave him. And yet," he mused, looking away over the fields, "and yet"—his voice began to ripple with laughter —"I think he is cured!"

"So do I!"

A little later my heart awoke into splendor. I turned eagerly.

"You remember our talk about Annette Wilkins last spring?"

He came to it as swift as a flash, his whole face illuminated.

"Yes, Nella."

"Is she back?"

"Just about due."

"Let's take her on at the Studio."

He looked at me once more in wonder. But we had reached the Studio. He leaned over me a moment before getting out.

"Nella!" His voice broke. "Are we beginning to see light?"

"We are! Oh, we are! I feel the stirring of a new dawn!"

And I marvel now how I could ever have loved Roland. It was just my inexperienced youth. It was the blind infatuation of a girl. I fell in love, not with the man, but with my

ideal of the man. Now, at last, I saw clearly that the ideal and the man had nothing in common; that Roland was merely a tall, rather handsome person, entirely empty-headed, and without much character.

And I realize now that the ideal I cherished is much more like someone else. Oh, how could I ever have been so blind!

I feel free to-night. I feel exactly as if somebody had pulled me up bodily out of a quicksand. Yes, or as if I were emerging from some horrid nightmare. And I again wonder how much writing this has had to do with the change in me. How much cleansing myself and speaking of the unspeakable has helped to rid me of the poison in my heart, so that now it is clean and wholesome once more.

If this is so, then meeting you, Annette, was the miracle of my life. For it forced me to face myself. It made me honest *with* myself. It made me go boldly down into the Inferno of my soul, where the unquenchable fires smouldered, and walk in those fires until at last I was purified.

Ah, Annette, you shall indeed see all that I have written. And though it may be a great blow to you, I am sure that you are sweet enough, and fine enough, and strong enough

to bear it. And, believe me, you will be better for it. And if, knowing the heavy cost of success, you still feel that you are impelled to go into the movies, you must come to us. H—— and I will take care of you.

Good-by, dear. I have been a long time over this. And I have, doubtless, written much that is nonsense! But it shall all stand just as it is. And you shall see it all. Only thus can you know how deep these things go. Finally, blessings on you, Sweet Sixteen!

Good-by! Good-by!

A Postscript.

September 21st.

Oh, if I could only sing to-night! If I were only a poet, and could let the rhythms of my spirit leap into words! If I could only write a song of praise! I did not know such happiness could exist in this world.

How am I worthy of it? And what have I ever done to deserve this gift of gifts? This gift of love?

I hear the little leaves blowing in a gale of autumn. They are clapping their hands with joy.

I seem to hear the earth and the stars singing to each other across the spaces.

The curtains are lifting in the wind, as if they, too, wanted to come to my arms. I think I love everything that lives and moves and has its being in this vast creation.

I think I ought to go down on my knees and pray.

It was eight this evening when he came. I heard his footstep coming along the corridor. He knocked at the door.

"Come!" I said. I was deep in my papers, reading over the foolish words and thoughts of the past.

He came in. I put my papers away. I looked at him standing there. We looked deep into each other; so deep that our spirits sprang through our eyes, and were one.

"Nella," he whispered, "we mustn't wait any longer."

He reached out for my hand, which he took gently, as if I were too sacred to touch. And I slipped to the floor, and sat between his knees. His arm went under my shoulder. My hand stroked his cheek.

"Oh," he breathed, "Nella, my beloved!"

"Beloved!" I echoed.

Closer he drew me, until our lips met.

. . . . . .

He is waiting to take me home in the dark night. But the darkness is no more, and I have gone home to the heart of all creation. Where love is, there is God!

I am coming, Beloved. I shall not keep you waiting.

THE END